

Portfolios Focused on Controversial Issues to Enhance Argumentative Writing Skills

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Abstract

This qualitative action research study aims at showing how the development and implementation of teacher-designed portfolios, based on controversial issues, enhanced students' argumentative writing skills. This study was conducted in a state funded school in Bogota, with fifteen students from 8th grade, and followed the grounded theory approach. The data-gathering instruments were students' artifacts, in this case the portfolios based on two controversial statements, with their corresponding self-assessment sections, teachers' field notes and a rubric. The outcomes suggested that students responded positively to the portfolio, its contents and activities. The materials facilitated to students their approach to the concepts of argumentation and fallacies, increasing the chances of obtaining argumentative short texts. The portfolio was effective and suitable because its activities provided rich and meaningful exposure to language in use, the controversial issues generated affective and cognitive engagement, and the production of short texts offered opportunities for contextualized and purposeful communication in English. The data also showed that the controversial issues triggered students' needs of expressing a point of view, and were topics that allowed the apprentices to learn how to inquire from different sources. Students developed critical thinking processes by interpreting, judging and applying multiple criteria to assume a position towards the controversial statements. Finally, students developed argumentative writing skills thanks to the progressive building of their writing in English and the input that allowed them to understand the basics of argumentation.

Keywords: materials development, controversial issues, argumentative writing skills.

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Resumen

Esta investigación acción cualitativa busca demostrar cómo el desarrollo e implementación de un portafolio diseñado por el maestro, basado en temas controversiales, mejoró las habilidades argumentativas escritas en inglés de 15 estudiantes de grado octavo. El estudio se llevó a cabo en un colegio público de Bogotá y se basó en el enfoque de la teoría fundamentada. Los instrumentos para recolectar datos fueron artefactos de los estudiantes, en este caso los portafolios con sus correspondientes secciones para autoevaluación, un diario de campo del profesor y una rúbrica. Los resultados sugieren que los estudiantes demostraron una respuesta positiva hacia el contenido y las actividades de los portafolios. Los materiales facilitaron a los estudiantes su acercamiento a los conceptos de la argumentación y de las falacias, aumentando las posibilidades de obtener textos argumentativos cortos. El portafolio fue efectivo y adecuado porque sus actividades tenían una exposición rica y significativa hacia inglés, los temas controversiales generaron un compromiso afectivo y cognitivo, y la producción de textos cortos ofrecieron oportunidades para una comunicación útil y contextualizada. Los temas controversiales provocaron la necesidad de los estudiantes por expresar un punto de vista, y fueron temas que les permitieron aprender a indagar de diferentes fuentes. Los estudiantes desarrollaron pensamiento crítico al interpretar, juzgar y aplicar múltiples criterios para asumir una posición frente a las afirmaciones controversiales. Finalmente, los estudiantes desarrollaron habilidades argumentativas escritas gracias a la construcción progresiva de su escritura en inglés y a la instrucción que les permitió comprender las bases de la argumentación.

Palabras clave: desarrollo de materiales, temas controversiales, habilidades argumentativas escritas.

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Introduction

During six years working in a public school, I noticed that students did not like to establish a point of view and support an idea based on verifiable information when it came to have a simple conversation with different points of view. Consequently, during some discussions, some of them did not participate and limited themselves to believe and repeat what their classmates said, while some others started an aggressive discussion without supporting ideas and without analyzing the position of the counterpart. Additionally, when students were required to write in English their perception about any topic or situation, their writings were grammatically poor and unstructured. Finally, they did not differentiate between writing a description and a point of view.

Some educators teach focused only on the grammar aspect of English and this might be part of the reason why many students do not use the language to communicate ideas, but to fulfil an academic requirement. According to the Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés, the development of the communicative competence implies that the teacher offers the students the possibility to learn the language as a means of communication to be performed in different contexts and situations, rather than an isolated code (“Estándares Básicos”, MEN, 2006). But there is a lack of contextualized materials at my school to offer this possibility.

Some teachers just download activities from internet, or implement materials that are in commercial books, and then, disjointed from the curriculum. So, the materials, the lessons, the exams and even the curriculum are out of date and designed to make learners perceive the English class as a set of decontextualized grammar rules, so they do not have the chance to develop a communicative competence. The English class must be not only a site to encourage

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students to express their thoughts, rather than to push them to speak or write grammatically perfect, but also an opportunity to design and implement contextualized material to teach English with communicative purposes. I observed that 8th grade students did not enjoy writing as much as doing other activities, and so their writing, even in Spanish, was not good enough considering the course they were attending. Therefore, I assumed that the English class could become a moment to inspire students to evaluate all the information they usually get from their contexts and establish a point of view based on arguments, and then to produce a written structured and well supported idea.

This proposal aimed at developing in students that communicative competence mentioned before and a written argumentative competence. This research study, aimed at proposing, implementing and describing the implementation of teacher-designed portfolios based on controversial issues, which guided students throughout a process that facilitated them to develop argumentative writing skills, and then, produce short argumentative texts. The goal was to encourage students to evaluate information about two controversial issues, to write their ideas, to support them effectively and to share their arguments with their classmates in a written form.

This document is divided into five chapters. Chapter one includes the research problem, the research question, the objectives, the related studies, and the characteristics of the context where this study took place. Chapter two presents the literature review related to the constructs of the study. Chapter three contains the methodological design, the research design and its approach, the type of study, the participants, the data gather instruments, the instructional design, the pedagogical intervention, the instructional objectives, and the innovation of the intervention. After that, it is described the theory of the nature of language and language learning, the

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methodological approach, the connection between the pedagogical strategy and the research inquiry, the instructional phases, a framework for the development of the proposed material, and a sample of the workshops. Chapter four contains the data analysis procedures, and the research categories and sub categories. Chapter five presents the conclusions, pedagogical implications and limitations of this study, and the suggested questions for further research.

Chapter I

Research Problem

Statement of the Problem

Teaching English in a public school in Bogota poses many difficulties: few hours allocated a week, large classes, lack of motivation in students, lack of contextualized materials for teaching English, and even coworkers' bad teaching practices that bring about students that simply repeat the English class, among others. I have reflected on the way I plan my classes, the materials I design, and the activities I carry out along with my students, and I have observed that if the class is not connected to their realities and needs, the motivation might decrease and so, the language performance.

English teachers should propose reflective and productive methodologies, classroom materials, and activities to educate students who, more than using this language correctly, can express feelings, emotions and points of view. It has been a main concern for me the way students perceive the world based on the information they gather from their common sources such as the social networks and the television. They do not evaluate that information, and tend to accept the points of view that the media want them to assume. The English class can be a moment to counteract this situation.

Writing and speaking are the most difficult skills to develop for my students for being productive skills. I decided to work on writing in this study for two reasons. First, it was evident in students' written artefacts that it was very difficult for them to write a correct text in English, and second because it showed me students' English productions in a way that allowed me to analyze them and help learners to improve the texts in their structure and their argumentative aspects. I observed in students' written productions, that they had problems to start writing a text

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in English if they did not have proper guidance. When writing, students tended to perform texts with inadequate content, poor organization, and stylistic inappropriateness. So, by being part of the writing process, I could monitor the progress and give guidance to it.

I observed that it was very difficult for students to support an idea. As they were rarely asked to establish and support a point of view at a formal level, they ignored how to do it without offending or attacking their counterpart. They could establish a point of view, but the problem was that they did not know how to use all the argumentation features to defend their statements. Teaching how to support an idea in English, is important for students as they are surrounded by different situations that are required to be perceived in a critical way, so learners can assume and defend a position. I asked students about their argumentation skills and their writing performance throughout a survey to verify if my assumptions about these issues were correct, and the outcomes confirmed that they had heard about argumentation, but they did not know what it was about. The survey also showed that students faced different problems when writing in English, such as lack of guidance and lack of vocabulary. I also consider relevant to help students developing argumentative skills not only for academic purposes, but also for their daily lives as the “argumentative competence has a direct influence on the successful human career path, enables him/her to work effectively, communicate reasonably, and to lead an intellectually active life” (S-Team, 2010, p.6). When students support adequately their ideas, they are able to communicate better and so, they have better chances to face an intolerant environment in a more rational way.

Research Question

After observing and reflecting about the facts that occur during the English classes I have guided, I decided to do something about students’ productions. I inquired about an instrument

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that allowed me, first, to motivate and guide students to write, and second, to observe students' points of view, their writing performance, and the elements of the argumentation within their texts.

Consequently, I decided to carry out an action research to observe the role of portfolios as a tool to improve eight grade students' argumentative writing skills, using two controversial issues as a trigger. Then, I stated the following question: How do the development and implementation of teacher-designed portfolios based on controversial issues enhance 8th grade students' argumentative writing skills? I decided to observe how an instrument as a portfolio provided an opportunity to write short argumentative texts in which a supported point of view was presented with proper arguments based on a controversial statement and contextualized with texts, images and videos that contained perceptions about topics that motivated students to assume a position.

Research Objectives

General objective. I established as a general objective to explore the role of portfolios based on controversial issues in students' argumentative writing skills.

Specific objectives. I also wanted to achieve three specific objectives (a) to describe students' argumentative skills related to controversial issues through their written productions; (b) to assess the effectiveness and suitability of teacher-developed portfolios for argumentative writing skills; and (c) to describe the role of controversial issues as a trigger to write argumentative short texts.

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Related Studies

The objective of this section is to present the studies that have been done related to the constructs that frame my study: materials development, controversial issues and argumentative writing skills.

It is relevant to mention that, after searching in several data bases such as Scielo, EBSCO, Dialnet, Doab and DOAJ, it has been very difficult to find research studies that have explored argumentative writing and controversial issues with the same population I worked. I believe that this might be explained as it is not very common to look into argumentative writing and to discuss controversial issues with 12 – 14 years old students. Normally you can easily find research studies with these two constructs done along with upper grades, like 10th and 11th and college students. This might happen because argumentation is not an easy issue for younger students.

Nevertheless, in terms of portfolios and writing, a very interesting action research study was the one carried out by Aydin (2014), who implemented Facebook as a writing tool, making of this social network an F-Portfolio with 101 English students. Aydin investigated students' attitudes toward this proposal. He implemented three different kinds of portfolios to collect data: a portfolio attitude scale, portfolio contribution questionnaire and a portfolio problem questionnaire. The researcher concluded that writers had positive attitudes toward the use of F-Portfolios in EFL writing, which was very important for my research as I was very interested in motivating students to write, so this provided me ideas to plan my intervention. This study is important for my research because it presents an innovative way to encourage students to write in English. Even though my proposal did not intend to implement Facebook as a portfolio, this

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social network was one of the sources I used to generate motivation in students to write. Besides, the portfolios in my study had a section with a social network appearance.

Another study in writing portfolios, Celis and Cárdenas (2014) carried out an action research with 8th graders from a Colombian public school located in a deprived area in Bogotá, Colombia. They worked on how students develop decision-making processes in the creation of collaborative work plans by using portfolios in English classes. These portfolios, along with interviews, field notes, and surveys, were relevant to collect data. They concluded that students could develop their autonomy when they were involved in collaborative decision-making practices and if awareness-raising processes took place. This study results relevant for two main reasons, firstly it presents how students participated in the creation of work plans by using their portfolios during the English classes. Secondly, this study was carried out also with 8th grade students who had a low level of English competence.

In terms of controversial issues and argumentative written skills, a mixed method study that focused on controversial issues to write argumentative essays, was the one carried out by Nippold (2010), who explored the characteristics of the argumentative writing in 80 pre-adolescent students who were attending an elementary school (Grade 5 or 6) in Oregon California. She used a controversial issue to motivate students to establish a point of view. They were asked to write an argumentative essay about animals that perform in circuses and to solve some verbal reasoning problems. She classified the students in two sub-groups: Conditional subgroup and Absolute subgroup. She found out, by using Toulmin's (1958) criteria, that 44% of the group considered both sides of the situation. In contrast, 56% considered only one side,

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absolutely ‘yes’ or absolutely ‘no’. This study is very useful for me as it presents a methodology to use a controversial issue to develop argumentative writing.

Likewise, Lau (2012) carried out an interesting participatory action research study at the Greater Toronto Area along with a co-worker, in which she wanted to demonstrate that by working on critical literacy, it is possible to motivate students to be aware of their social contexts. She documented the progress of 15 Chinese students from 7th and 8th grades with limited English proficiency by implementing a theme-based approach and critical literacy for learning English. Teachers planned a group of activities based on controversial issues to teach some comprehension strategies such as prediction, summarizing, and determining meaning from context, and then more complex critical literacy strategies such as formulating written opinions and supporting arguments with reasons. After the intervention, the author concluded, based on students’ artifacts and her observations, that the study impacted learners because they gained linguistic skills and sense of their own voice, and the teacher because she changed her mind about students’ ability to develop critical literacy skills at that age. This study contributed to mine as it showed that it is possible to discuss with students from 8th grade, certain topics that are usually set aside for higher levels, while working on language skills.

Ruiz (2014) conducted a case study to show how the use of debates, which implied elaborating arguments on controversial issues, developed the under-grade students critical thinking skills, in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, by using debates. She carried out this study in a public university, with twelve students of English four level. The instruments implemented to gather information were field notes, video and tape recordings, a needs assessment survey applied at the beginning of the pedagogical intervention, and two

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questionnaires given during and after the implementation. She found out that students supported their opinions through diverse modes of argumentation and after analyzing their context, they could criticize or judge their peers' viewpoints and even propose new alternatives to face a controversial situation. This study was very useful for my research study as it deals with implementing critical thinking to discuss controversial issues in an English class.

On the other hand, Knudson (2010), analyzed the differences in the argumentative writing of 10th and 12th graders. She divided the class in four groups. Each group received different tools, aids and instructions to write argumentative texts. She used Toulmin's (1958) criteria to evaluate students' productions, finding out that the use of the components of an argument in 10th grade and 12th grade students were stable and she suggests that the differences between both groups depend on the previous knowledge students had about the topics discussed. This study is very important as it presents a methodology to analyze students' argumentative writing throughout Toulmin's criteria.

Setting

This research study took place at the Marruecos y Molinos IED School, a public institution at the Rafael Uribe Uribe zone in Bogota with morning, afternoon and night shifts, which offers education to about 3.000 students from preschool to 11th grade. The pedagogical approach in this school is based on the Teaching for Comprehension proposal (E.P.C its acronym in Spanish), so the class's development must be in accordance with the aspects of this approach. The school's institutional project (P.E.I its acronym in Spanish) reads: "Answer to a dream of growing up together and being happy while we learn" (Colegio Marruecos y Molinos I.E.D, 2015, trans.) and it is taken into account along the whole academic processes of the students. Teachers have three items to design their classes and to evaluate their apprentices that include:

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growing up, related to the academic processes; being happy, related to students' attitudinal aspect, and learning, related to the cognitive processes (Colegio Marruecos y Molinos I.E.D, 2015, pp. 39-41, trans). The group of learners that participated was from 8th grade and they had a low level of proficiency in English. They regularly receive 4 hours of class a week. Although this school has its focus on mathematics, it belongs to a group of public schools that participate in the "Aulas de inmersión" project of the Secretaría de Educación de Bogotá (S.E.D its acronym in Spanish).

Rationale

Through this research study, I hope I will be able to impact, not only students' lives in terms of English knowledge and how they receive and assume the information they are exposed to, but also the practices and purposes of teaching English in my school. One of my main objectives as a teacher is to demonstrate that education must be a way to transform the social context through helping students to be critical and to assume positions according to the information they get from their environment and to defend their points of view. This is something meaningful to me as teacher because I need to prove my points and this research study might become a good support of my position. It is almost like the more I can teach my students to support their ideas and to be critical, the more I am able to support my own ideas.

Unfortunately, in my school some teachers still teach by implementing old and ineffective methodologies and materials. One of my purposes is to have elements to invite those teachers to upgrade their practices, and why not, to make of my proposal a base to build up along with them, original, interesting, useful, contextualized and effective methodologies and materials to teach English.

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Another concern I have about teaching practices is the way the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional - MEN its acronym in Spanish, henceforth) presents the relation between English as an area associated to language and the argumentation skill. It results very confusing that, according to the MEN, students must be able to develop an argumentative writing skill (“Estándares Básicos”, MEN, 2006), but the competences mainly aim at reproducing and describing the world. There is not emphasis on supporting ideas. According to the MEN, argumentative writing is a process that students must carry out when they get to the 8th grade, and writing is considered a means to communicate emotions, feelings and points of view, just in 10th and 11th grades (“Estándares Básicos”, MEN, 2006). I strongly believe that there is inconsistency and that motivated me to conduct this research study with 8th graders, to explore this possible lack of congruence.

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Chapter II

Literature Review

To build a better understanding of how a portfolio based on controversial issues enhances 8th grade students' argumentative writing skills, it is indispensable to present the three constructs that support my research, which are development of portfolios, controversial issues and argumentative writing skills.

Materials Development

One of the constructs of this research study deals with the development of materials for teaching English. Tomlinson (2013) defined materials development as:

Both a field of study and a practical undertaking. As a field, it studies the principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of language teaching materials. As an undertaking, it involves the production, evaluation and adaptation of language teaching materials, by teachers for their own classrooms and by materials writers for sale or distribution. (p.1).

He also stated that developing materials includes procedures to evaluate, adapt, design, produce, exploit and research on those materials (Tomlinson, 2012). Then, to develop materials in the classroom is a must for every English teacher. Students are the ones who benefit by learning from materials that are not only related to their needs, but also supported by a process that can guarantee the effectiveness of the activities and the content.

Materials. In the classroom, almost anything that contributes to students' learning processes, is considered materials (Tomlinson, 2011), but the challenge is to innovate and to avoid using the same old worksheets whose only objective is to fill in gaps or to answer questions with predetermined options. According to Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2013), "Materials . . .

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are socio-cultural resources that facilitate not only linguistic interaction but also cultural exchanges between the various human groups. Moreover, they are forms of social mediation that allow flow of knowledge” (p. 10). Teachers must be aware of the importance of implementing materials that include students’ needs and particularities of the context. It is not easy, it is time consuming and it involves a lot of hard work to establish the relations between what the teacher designs and the way the material actually works with students. Nevertheless, students are the ones who benefit from this process as they will learn by implementing relevant and personalized materials (Montijano, 2014). When teachers develop materials, bearing in mind students’ needs, allow them to build knowledge from the sociocultural interaction with classmates, the school and their life outside the school.

Contextualized materials. For years, in Colombia some teachers have been teaching using materials from other countries, or that were conceived for contexts with different characteristics to their realities and which contain decontextualized information. It is important to bear always in mind students’ needs and voices, so teachers can understand what and how they need to learn (Núñez & Téllez, 2008; Núñez & Téllez, 2009; Núñez & Téllez, 2015; Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009). Reflecting on students’ reactions and attitudes towards the materials and the content they work with, gives the teacher the possibility to adjust that material class by class to improve the processes and the relevance of the content. I consider very important to avoid repeating over and over again, year after year, the same type of activities as every group of students is different and have different necessities and different ways to approach the learning of a foreign language.

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Authentic and non-authentic materials. This research study required the implementation of material that contained information and topics taken from sources that were not created for language learning purposes, which Montijano defined as authentic materials. For this scholar, “real poems, menus, songs, or, say, advertisements are just a few examples that bring students into contact with the language as it is used by the target language community to meet actual or potential communication needs. (Montijano, 2014, p. 281).

Richards, defined authentic materials as the implementation in teaching of elements such as texts, photographs, videos, and other resources that were not conceived for pedagogical purposes. He also stated that authentic material may motivate students to learn as it is more likely to be interesting and motivating (As cited in Dastgoshadeh & Jalilzadeh, 2011). Rogers (1998) stated that this kind of material is appropriate as learner needs and interests are taken into account, and this engagement to students’ characteristics helps to establish a meaningful communication (as cited in Ghaderpanahi & Rahimi, 2012). According to what I have observed as teacher, the more connected the content is to students’ realities, the easier it is to keep their attention on the accomplishment of the class objectives.

This kind of materials aim at facilitating tangible communication instead of teaching the language itself, (Thomas, 2014) and the portfolios implemented in this study contained texts, videos and pictures that were conceived for sharing a message in English and not for teaching the language. The materials were also designed taking into account those sources that students consult in their daily lives. Rogers (as cited in Ghaderpanahi & Rahimi, 2012) affirmed that authentic materials are “appropriate and quality in terms of goals, objectives, learner needs and interests, and natural in terms of real life and meaningful communication” (para. 3). According to

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what I have observed as teacher, the more connected the content is to students' realities, the easier it is to keep their attention on the accomplishment of the class objectives.

As this research study aims at describing students' points of view, they were considered the most important source to design the material. Students' experiences were taken into account in terms of education and their daily lives, their English level, their aspirations, their interests and needs, this way the processes are more meaningful (Howard & Major, n.d). When it comes to work with authentic material, it is difficult to find authentic texts suitable for use in material for students with low English proficiency, so it is necessary to remove low lexical items and obscure syntax or idioms, and to accommodate the length of the text to the students' English level (Richards, 2005). During this study, I modified some texts so students were able to interact with the content.

Teacher-developed portfolios. This research study was focused on analyzing students' written productions, so the material must allow the observation of this skill. Besides, it was important to follow up the progress in the writing process, as students were able to analyze their own production and their performance. Bearing those objectives in mind, a portfolio presented some benefits, that Delett et al., defined and summarized as "a portrait of what students know and what they can do, offer a multidimensional perspective of student progress over time, encourage student self-reflection and participation, and link instruction and assessment" (As cited in Lo, 2010, p. 78,). Bailey stated that there are two kinds of portfolios depending on their purpose: (a) the progress portfolio, which is focused on the improvement of the students' courses, and (b) the achievement portfolio, that is related to a collection of their best works over their past courses (as cited in Martín & Cárdenas, 2014). For this study, I implemented the progress portfolio bearing

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in mind the main parts: an introductory section, which contents a summary of the subjects; an academic works section, which shows the students' upgrading, and an assessment section that contains students' reflections about their experience (Martín & Cárdenas, 2014). Additionally, the assessment section included questions that aimed at evaluating the three main constructs of this research study. These elements allowed students to follow their progress in terms of writing and argumentation while they gave me relevant information related to the design of the portfolios.

Portfolios are useful whenever a teacher wants to describe students' writing performance. Although it is very time demanding, it is worth developing along with the students an artifact that helps them to understand and to observe their performance to carry out actions that contribute to improve their writing. This kind of material also offers the possibility to make the students active part of the class development. I will conceptualize everything related to the implemented materials on chapter three. The materials designed and implemented during this research study are ruled by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) principles and structured under theoretical frameworks that are fully addressed in the next chapter.

Controversial Issues

Broadly, controversial issues are "important policies or proposals on which conflicting views are held by large numbers of people in schools, community and nation" (The School District of Philadelphia, 1990, p.1). It means that when there are two different points of view about certain topic, there is controversy. Within the classroom, a teacher can easily find these kinds of situations among students; from a simple disagreement about where they are supposed to sit, to different perceptions about religions, soccer teams, music likes, to mention some. Harwood (1990) described it as a dialogue that students and teachers perform about a subject that contains

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elements for disagreement. This definition is more related to the classroom and the pedagogical environment.

It is not common to find controversial issues as a content to be studied in schools' curricula. What is worst, some teachers do not agree on discussing these topics with students, and a common reason they give is because parents might find these kinds of discussions something that should be addressed at home. But if schools do not teach young people how to take part of deliberations about these type of issues, they will make students believe that those topics are not relevant and that are issues that should not be discussed (Hess, 2009). It might end up with the so common line "you do not talk about politics, soccer or religion with your friends"; instead of it, it should be taught how to manage a discussion in an appropriate way.

Colombia is a country that through its history has been involved in wars and violence and unfortunately it is easy to find children predisposed to fight for any reason. Schools should take part of this situation and be the place where students learn how to generate debates that look for the improvement of our society instead of pointless and aggressive discussions. Stradling offered a definition for controversial issues that fits a contested society like the Colombian one as "those problems and disputes that divide society and for which significant groups within society offer conflicting explanations and solutions based on alternative values" (As cited in McCully, 2014, p. 52). This study attempted to help students to deal with those everyday controversial issues in such way that they could assume a position based on arguments, defend their point of view and learn from others' opinions. This might allow them, not only to understand how to write an argumentative short text, but also to deal with those controversial discussions in a proper way.

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Controversial issues and critical thinking. To define how a controversial issue is a trigger to write an argumentative short text, it is important to explore critical thinking, as it becomes the process that links the analysis of a statement or situation, to end up writing a supported point of view. As it has been mentioned, the purpose of this study was to propose a methodology that allowed students to use the English class to incorporate situations related to their daily lives in which it was necessary to analyze, and then, to establish a well-supported point of view. The purpose was to develop classes and activities that encouraged students to use thinking processes such as enquiring, generating and evaluating conclusions, being open-minded, and communicating effectively, as it prepares students in an ampler form for life (Nessel & Graham, 2007). In the end, every educational research study should end up with the improvement of students' lives on those aspects that can make them better citizens and human beings.

To give an argument based on an issue that generates controversy, it is necessary to use those cognitive abilities that allow humans to interpret, judge, apply multiple criteria, develop tolerance of ambiguity and develop self-regulation of the own thinking to answer a question worth answering (Pineda, Núñez & Téllez, 2004), which means, to carry out critical thinking processes. The implementation of discussions about controversial issues in an English class, opens the possibility of implementing strategies that allow students to develop critical thinking abilities while they learn how to establish a point of view and to support adequately their ideas.

Controversial issues in EFL materials. In general, education in Colombia still aims at the memorization of contents, leaving behind a concept of a more contemporary and global education, in which the focus is to help learners to comprehend the world in which they live and to prepare them to be good human beings (Clarke, 2005). More than teaching a second language,

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I have always been interested in using the English class as a way to improve students' critical way to perceive the world so they can be citizens that are aware of their context. In this sense, the proposed materials included two main controversial issues -the use of social networks and animals in shows- that were selected considering students' voice and that addressed the activities and the argumentative texts created by the learners.

Including this kind of topics in the material that English teachers develop, help students to identify their own *deep culture*, and reflect on their sociocultural norms, their lifestyles, their beliefs, and their values. There is enough material that deals with *surface culture* that uses the language to make students grow the fake idea that people are happy and everything is perfect, because they do not discuss about all the defects that exist in the cultural behavior (Gómez, 2015). Even from an early age it is important to assist students to observe their contexts from a critical point of view, and include in the materials for EFL topics and activities that allow inquiry and analysis of controversial issues.

Literacy as a framework for writing

There are many ways to define literacy and each definition offers a different perception of how to teach it (Wray, 2004). It is important to mention that one of the elements that define literacy deals with one of the constructs of this study, which is writing, more specifically, argumentative writing, as it will be explained later. Then, I would like to discuss the following definition:

One definition of literacy claims that it involves having mastery over the process by which culturally significant information is coded. If this is accepted, it implies that the literate person, far from being controlled by the manifestations of literacy, is, in fact, in

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control of them. This involves having some autonomy, in the process of using literacy, and having the ability to make choices (Wray, 2004, p.2).

More than decoding a text, reading implies a process in which the context and the meaning play an important role as they should be perceived as elements to triangulate the information and then make decisions based on analysis. Then, literacy in terms of writing is the ability to understand texts from the context, interpret them and explain them in a communicative and autonomously way.

As I wanted to describe how students support their ideas, it was important to focus on a skill that allowed me to observe their production. Writing is one of the productive skills; although this language ability has different types, the argumentative one was the best option to analyze how students support their ideas. As writing is a skill and argumentation can be expressed through this skill, it is necessary to conceptualize them separately. After that, both concepts will merge into one: argumentative writing.

Writing. When it comes to talk about learning English, it is important to describe what the communicative competence is, what the required skills to achieve this competence are and how humans learn those skills, specifically for this study, writing. Ortega stated that “the communicative competence is referred then, to the ability of the appropriate use of language and the successful achievement of a communicative purpose in a given context” (as cited in Pineda et al., 2004, p. 69, trans). In light of this, learning English, rather than memorizing a set of grammar rules, is a way to communicate, and so, it must be learnt in a communicative way.

Writing is an effective way to express what human beings think, feel, observe and interpret about the world that surround them. According to Nunan (1999), writing has some

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characteristics that “can be observed within the sentence at the level of grammar, and beyond the sentence at the level of text structure” (p. 275). It is one of the language skills that, along with speaking, are related to the production of language. Additionally, this scholar asserted that though writing and speaking are related, as they share some characteristics, there are some elements that are not common between both (Nunan, 1999). For example, while speaking is a spontaneous way to communicate, writing requires more time to be conceived and this characteristic makes of it a skill that can be modified or adjusted.

Writing has some principles that establish the development of this skill: functional, related to the moment when it is decided how and what for to write; linguistic, related to the shape of the written text and includes some rules such as orthography, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic; and relational, associated to the relation between what is written, the real world and the spoken language in the culture (Goodman, 2002). Unfortunately, some English teachers are focused only on the linguistic principle and they forget the other ones, designing writing activities that just look for a grammatically decent written text. It is necessary to allow students to write having a purpose in mind, which is related to their world and their culture, which means, to bear in mind the functional and the relational principles.

According to the MEN, there are ten communicative competences that a student should develop at the 8th grade (“Estándares Básicos”, MEN, 2006). In that list, only two are related to argumentation and the target of most of them is to make students describe. It is necessary to balance those competences going beyond, expressing feelings, points of view and supporting ideas from what they can describe. It might increase students’ motivation towards writing.

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Argumentation. As it has been mentioned before, English, more than a grammar class, is a language. I have observed as student first, and then as teacher, that some colleagues are focused on teaching how to use grammar structures correctly and that they do not allow students to experiment and play with the language itself, which means, to communicate regardless their mistakes. It is very important to offer students opportunities to use English to express their ideas, their needs, their feelings, so they can communicate, instead of limiting them to fill in the gaps, and then, they might be able to establish and support their own conclusions and points of view. According to Chomsky the reason why language exists in humans, is not to allow the communication, but to allow the creation and the expression of the thinking. The expression of thinking is a human need which responds to the language appearance, if apart from that, we are able to communicate language, much better. (As cited in Baron & Müller, 2014, pp. 429, 421.) Then, writing must be a process that learners should follow to create and express their thinking, and argumentation is a process that allows them to expose what is on their minds.

Argumentation can be used to approach to communication in a more critical way. It is defined as more than stating a point of view, or than a pointless discussion. It is the effort to support those points of view with reasons (Weston, 2009). Nowadays, the school must be focused on carrying out processes that allow students to think, to be critical and to reflect on their own contexts, instead of shaping them to adapt and repeat based on a fragmented view of reality. It is harmful for our society to keep a banking concept of education in which the teacher just deposits knowledge in students. This concept does not allow them to have critical consciousness to intervene in the world based on the reflections they made about their surroundings (Freire, 2000). For years, education has been perceived as the place where teachers “shape” students’ minds,

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instead of an experience that allows new citizens to understand their context, its problems and the role they play in the world.

In light of this, the English class must be that place and that moment to encourage students to express their thoughts and beliefs and to support those ideas. Apparently, students do not enjoy writing as much as doing other activities, and so their writing, even in Spanish, has many deficiencies. Therefore, the English class must also become a learning setting to inspire students to evaluate all the information they get from the media, their partners, relatives, and teachers to make them feel the need of creating texts where their reasoning is presented. Likewise, they should express their points of view and support them with true evidence (authorities in the field, factual information, true examples, analogies, cause and effect relationships) (Weston, 2009) and then produce a structured and well supported idea, in this case in a written form. This goal can be achieved by giving them guidance to write argumentative texts based on two different debatable/controversial statements.

Some teachers argue that trying to teach argumentation to children is almost impossible as they are not able to structure a real argument, but the Common Core Standards states that at 6th grade, students must create texts with clear evidence and enough organized reasons to be an argumentative text (Hillocks, 2011). In fact, students can express that something is unfair; for instance, the rules in the school, a decision made by a teacher, their scores, etc., but they have difficulty to present in an organized way the reasons why they consider that something is unfair (Hillocks, 2011). Consequently, the teacher must guide students to learn how to articulate their perceptions in a well-structured argument.

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As I mentioned above, some students cannot articulate an idea properly. Whenever they are trying to present their points of view against somebody who thinks differently, they tend to start up a discussion without any structure or specific purpose different to fight verbally. It is very important to teach that to give an argument is to put together a group of reasons to support a conclusion, instead of just offending and resorting to *ad hominem*, which is a type of fallacy where one of the parts attacks the counterpart (Weston, 2009). This is the most common mistake made by students in a discussion at my school, and I believe that if they knew better how to conduct a discussion many fights would be avoided. Of course, there are other elements that affect school's coexistence, but an intelligent way of debating is a contribution to improve the way students solve their differences.

Teaching students how to develop their argumentative competence must be fundamental in education because during this process they elaborate a discourse to give supported ideas on their beliefs about an issue. If they want to validate that discourse, they have to confront their classmates, teachers or family. This procedure let them reformulate their speeches considering other's discourses (Pineda & Núñez, 2001). If students are introduced into the world of argumentation since they are young, their perception of the world changes in terms of how they articulate an idea based on the information they gather from conventional sources such as internet, the media in general and even what they hear from friends. According to Weston, there are four types of arguments (Padilla, Douglas & López, 2011), but I considered just three of them as I was working with eight grade students, and bearing in mind that argumentation is not an easy issue. The chosen arguments were: Arguments from an authority, arguments by examples and arguments about causes. The arguments from an authority are the ones that are based on the

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citation of an author who is considered a reference in the discussed field. The arguments by examples are the ones that are based on many different examples that are used as evidence to support a statement, and the arguments about causes are the ones based on a proposal of the relation between a cause and its effect (Padilla, et al. 2011).

English is a foreign language that students are learning, and they are not constantly exposed to it, which makes of speaking a difficult skill to be developed. So, developing argumentative speaking is even harder at my school. Then, writing seemed to be a skill that allowed me to show students where their mistakes were at a more tangible level, and then to correct them. Argumentative writing is a written means of communication that involves a claim based on evidence; a warrant supported by backing, which supports the claim; qualifications and counter arguments are presented. In other words, a type of writing in which the elements of argumentation are properly exposed (Hillocks, Jr, 2011). Students who can create short argumentative texts, are students that improve the way they present their reasoning and are open to listening to other's points of view. But, to produce argumentative texts, it is necessary to have some particular skills: argumentative writing skills.

Argumentative Writing Skills. It is evident the interest of teachers, MEN, Secretaría de Educación de Bogotá (SED henceforth) and all the participants of education in Colombia, on developing an argumentative competence in students. Based on the Estándares from the MEN, teachers include in the curriculum the need of having students writing argumentative texts, but it is hard to determine how aware they are of what it is required to develop this competence in learners. Even the SED, on its Reorganización Curricular por Ciclos made an interesting proposal where, through contextualizing the English learning process with topics related to students`

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needs, argumentation takes an important place as apprentices are supposed to be able to elaborate texts supporting their ideas (Reorganización Curricular por Ciclos, SED, 2015). But when it comes to designing classes with activities that help students to develop that argumentative competence, teachers seem to limit to ask their pupils to write essays without bearing in mind the skills that are required to get to an argumentative text.

Perhaps, the reason is that there is not enough empirical evidence of how students develop argumentative skills (Kuhn & Udellor, 2003). So, teachers expect students to develop these abilities, but they do not have enough information to set a syllabus that class by class helps pupils to understand what argumentation is and how to support an idea. Students must develop these skills at an early age in all the subjects at school, including English, as it is an intelligent way to express with criteria, a position about a specific topic (Pineda, 2003). Then, it is necessary to observe and describe what kind of in-class activities contribute to develop these skills, in the case of this study, for writing short argumentative texts in English. So, the first thing to do is to define what argumentative skills are and their relationship with the development of an argumentative competence.

According to what I have read, there is not a definition of what an argumentative skill is or which are those skills, but the concept is mentioned whenever the topic is argumentation, and without the development of those skills, it is not possible to develop an argumentative competence. Then, I dare to give a definition of this concept as I deem important to conceptualize what I want to observe from students' written productions. Broadly, a skill is defined as "the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well" (Dictionary.com, 2016). Consequently, based on this definition of skill and the definition of

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argumentative writing by Hillocks (2011) mentioned above, argumentative writing skills are the abilities to write and communicate a claim where the elements of argumentation are properly articulated.

These abilities come from the practice with exercises that promote the knowledge of the basics of argumentation. According to Leshowitz, DiCerbo and Syminton, they are divided into three levels which are: (a) *Pseudo-knowledge*, which is created when arguments are combined within a knowledge base without any questioning; (b) *Destabilized knowledge* which occurs when there is insecurity about the quality of arguments and when criteria for evaluating arguments are examined; and (c) *Reasoned knowledge* that is produced, when knowledge is based on well-founded and self-developed arguments (as cited in S-Team, 2010). The development of argumentative skills results in the development of an argumentative competence. With the development of these skills, students can demonstrate that they are competent to write argumentative texts. As competence is defined as “the expression of human acquired qualification or ability to perform qualified action under the influence of acquired skills, values and attitudes” (S-Team, 2010, p.18), we can say that an argumentative writing competence is the group of skills required to elaborate and perform in a written form, an idea based on the fundamentals of argumentation.

Chapter III

Methodological Design

As I already mentioned, the purpose of this research study is to describe and analyze how the design and implementation of teacher-developed portfolios based on controversial issues enhance students' argumentative writing. Likewise, I wanted to observe the role of the controversial issues as an element to develop the argumentative competence in the English class. The theoretical constructs that have supported this investigation are: argumentative writing skills, development of portfolios and controversial issues, which were presented previously. In this chapter, the research design and the instructional design are presented.

Research Design

This section of the methodological design is related to the type of research approach and study, the statement of the main research question, the definition of the general and specific objectives, the setting, the participants and the instruments used to gather data.

Approach. This research study is a qualitative research as it responds to the definition given by Denzin and Lincoln:

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (as cited in Richards, 2003, p. 11).

Bearing this definition in mind, I observed and described what the development and implementation of the teacher-designed portfolios evidenced about the enhancement of the argumentative writing in 8th grade students. This observation was done in a natural setting as the

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English class, in which everything was connected to the purposes of the curriculum and the participants were the regular members of an 8th grade class.

Type of study. I used action research to conduct this study because it was the most suitable way to set a proposal that changed my classes and schools' realities. Elliott (1991) defined action research as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (p. 69). Likewise, Check and Schutt (2012) stated that "action research in its strict sense refers to research activities that use a cyclical, action reflection model to investigate and attempt to make change in an organization, for example, a whole school" (p. 264). This cyclical process allowed me to verify if the material I designed to improve students' argumentative writing skills, gave me continuous information relevant for my study, or if those materials needed to be adjusted.

According to Kemmis and McTaggart, (as cited in Burns, 2010) action research is a four stages cycle. The first one is planning, in which the researcher identifies the problem and plans an action to improve an aspect of the context. In relation to this study, I found out during my regular classes that students had problems to present an idea and support it in an appropriate way, that their writing needed to be improved, and that the school did not have proper material to overcome those situations. The second stage is action, in which the objective of the plan is to intervene the teaching practice during a specific period. Regarding this study, I designed and implemented a workshop contained in a portfolio to intervene my classes during the 3rd term. The third stage is observation, which is the stage that implies that the teacher observes the outcomes of the intervention, while documenting and collecting data with impartial and suitable tools. In this stage, I observed and described what the role of the portfolio was in that attempt to improve

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students' argumentative writing skills, by implementing students' artifacts with its corresponding self-assessment section, field notes, and a rubric as data gathering instruments. The last stage is reflection, in which the teacher observes and defines what the action brings about to comprehend the explored subject. With this stage, the researcher decides if it is necessary to start the stages again, or if it is the moment to share the research. During this stage, I reflected on what I observed and described what I found during my intervention. After evaluating the outcomes of that first workshop, I designed a second one making some adjustments based on the evaluation of the initial workshop. Then, I started the cycle once again by checking the way students were presenting and supporting their written ideas after working with the portfolios.

Participants.

Students. The participants of this research study were fifteen students from one of the 8th grade groups I worked with at the Marruecos y Molinos School IED. The name of the technique implemented to select them was convenience sampling, which Singh and Singh (1996) defined as the type of sampling in which “the sample is restricted to a part of the population that is readily accessible” (p. 7). With this kind of sample, the participants are selected based on the convenience of the researcher; for example, due to the availability (Stevens, 1996). The 8th grade groups were assigned to me at the beginning of the year by the coordinator of the school and I had already worked with them since 7th grade.

These students had been working with me in the English class since seventh grade so I already knew their performance in English language. They were at an A starters level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Cambridge, 2016) but they were able to build up short narrative and descriptive texts, to understand short written texts, to

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have short conversations in English about their lives and some past personal experiences, and to understand spoken or sung texts. Their age range was between 12 and 15 and they belonged to a medium-low class economic status.

Teacher-researcher and text developer. My role as English teacher was to guide my students towards a meaningful learning of the English language, specifically in their writing skill, while introducing them into the world of the argumentation. As a researcher, I was an observer who described the events during the implementation, and reflected on them. As a text developer, I designed two workshops contained in a portfolio with authentic material, and I adjusted them to be sure that the material and the collected data gave me the information that was relevant to answer my research question.

Data gathering instruments. For collecting information and for triangulating and validating the data during this research study, I focused on three instruments: the portfolios with their corresponding self-assessment sections, which were students' artifacts, teachers' field notes and a rubric. The three instruments were piloted with a different group from eighth grade, and were adjusted to improve their accuracy.

Portfolios. For this research study, the portfolios are students' artifacts, which Kalmbach and Carr (2010) defined as "any kind of physical documentation that sheds additional perspective on your research question and topic. Artifacts are pieces of physical evidence, such as student work, tallies of student, behavior, or test score results" (p. 78). From this instrument, I expected to observe the role of the portfolio throughout its contents in the development of short argumentative texts, and the effectiveness of the activities I designed. Additionally, each

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workshop in the portfolio ended up with a self-assessment part that also gave me pertinent information to analyze the implementation of the materials.

Field notes. I also used my field notes because they “often provide clues to fundamental issues of importance and group dynamics for the actors involved” (McKernan, 1996, p.93). From this instrument, I wanted to gather enough information about all the events during the sessions, and the process of implementing the portfolios class by class.

Rubric. I implemented a rubric to analyze the development of students` argumentative written skills. Cooper (2013) defined rubric as “a set of rules for scoring student products or student performance”. Cooper stated that rubrics “are especially helpful when you are trying to assess learning outcomes and processes that closely match the kind of processes that are useful in daily living and in real-life vocational settings” (p. 338). This rubric was designed to be implemented by the student, a classmate and the teacher, to have three different perspectives from the learners` written productions.

Instructional Design

I wanted to improve 8th grade students` argumentative writing; to do so, it was necessary to focus on the development of their argumentative skills. Then, it was essential to find out how to motivate students to establish a point of view, and to support it to work on those skills. The answer was controversial issues. Discussing issues related to their lives that implied the need of assuming a position, was considered the best way to trigger the writing of short argumentative texts. Having this in mind, it was required to develop material that allowed students to follow stages class by class to end up writing properly argumentative texts. The best option was the implementation of portfolios that contained instructions and activities that brought about students` argumentative productions. Therefore, the instructional design of this study focuses on

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a pedagogical intervention and its corresponding stages to develop the argumentative writing skills of the students from 8th grade class at the I.E.D Marruecos y Molinos School.

Pedagogical intervention. My pedagogical intervention was related to the design and implementation of two workshops contained in a teacher-designed portfolio; each workshop included four and three lessons related to argumentation and to vocabulary, reading, speaking, listening and writing activities about controversial issues to develop 8th grade students' argumentative writing skills, and the corresponding self-assessment section. As I already mentioned, I decided to develop and implement as a strategy a portfolio, which O'Malley and Valdez Pierce defined as "the systematic collection and evaluation of student work measured against predetermined scoring criteria, such as scoring guides, rubrics, checklists, or rating scales" (as cited in Lynch, 1999, p. 3). When implementing portfolios, it is possible to bear in mind students' perceptions in terms of participation, allowing them to make decisions about the contents and about how they are going to be evaluated, which make them be aware of their own processes (Martín & Cardenas, 2014). As it was mentioned in the statement of the problem section, there is a student's lack of motivation that I considered, might be overcome by involving them in the whole process.

The portfolio was divided into two workshops about two main controversial issues; the first one with four lessons and the second one with three lessons, each lesson contained different activities with authentic materials (readings, images and videos) that concluded with the creation of a short argumentative text. This text was the outcome of one draft that was corrected by the students after teacher's feedback. This feedback was given in a personal and conversational way.

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According to Brooks-Harris and Stock-ward's (1999) workshops facilitate the achievement of goals related to several topics in a short period of time. Moreover, they are adaptable and customizable for students' needs to rise their motivation, and then increase the chances of a long-term change. These features fit not only the characteristics of my students and their contexts but also the purposes of this research study.

The portfolio, its content, activities, and objectives were framed within the concept of Second Language Acquisition (SLA henceforth), defined as “the process by which people acquire and/or learn any language in addition to the first language” (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 11). Moreover, to achieve the objective of learning a second language, the implemented materials must meet some principles related to SLA. I bore in mind six SLA principles for this research study, which I explain next.

The first principle indicates that the material must have an attractive content by being innovative, diverse, eye-catching, and interesting (Tomlinson, 1998). My students are exposed to different information sources such as internet, television, and street life itself, which makes it very difficult to present them content that calls their attention. However, I have found that, when I bring them short articles about issues relevant for them, with images that support the content, it is easier to engage them in the activities. Consequently, the portfolios contained different topics related to their daily lives and images to illustrate the content, and to make it attractive.

A second principle claims that it is important that students feel comfortable (Tomlinson, 1998). It has been demonstrated throughout SLA research studies that students learn better when they are stress-free and engaged during the learning activities (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). My school is not child-friendly; it is overcrowded, it has big classrooms with large groups, there is no

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place to play, among others. These are conditions that keep students anxious and stressed. This situation apparently brings along lack of attention and problems to focus on the activities. Thus, any activity that makes students feel relaxed is going to improve their mood towards the class. Then, the portfolio contained short texts and very concrete activities to avoid that the students felt bored and unmotivated to carry the activities out. Besides, the vocabulary was very basic to avoid that students felt stuck and stopped writing. Finally, the evaluation of their writings was focused more on the content and their arguments, rather than just the perfect use of grammar, to avoid that students felt anxious about memorizing rules.

According to the third principle I selected, students need to recognize the material and its content as pertinent and valuable (Tomlinson, 1998). I have observed that the more relevant and useful the activity is for students, the harder is their endeavor to achieve an objective. That is why the activities in the portfolio were related to controversial issues that had to do with their daily lives. I was careful to include topics of which students already had information, perhaps taken from sources such as the social networks and internet in general.

The fourth principle I selected deals with the idea that the material must favor learners' emotions (Tomlinson, 1998). According to what I have observed, I am able to say that when my students feel emotionally attached to a writing activity, their texts have better and deeper content. Consequently, the controversial issues were conceived to arouse emotions in students, and aimed at involving learners in such a way that they felt the need to give a point of view.

The fifth chosen principle indicates that the material and its content must favor the left and right brain lateralization by involving students intellectually, artistically and emotionally (Tomlinson, 1998). As I work with large groups conformed by students with very different

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cognitive characteristics, it is very important to design and carry out activities that allow every student to learn according to their own needs and characteristics. Thus, each workshop presented the issues in different ways such as videos, images, and short texts. Besides, some parts of the portfolio (e.g. the cover) were decorated and customized by students as they wanted, so they did not only feel it as very personal, but they also had the chance to be creative. Additionally, during the implementation of the portfolio, students were asked to color some teacher design drawings to show that the concepts in those sections were understood, which meant that, if the drawing did not have color, the concept was not assimilated by the learners.

The sixth and last principle I selected for this study points out that the material must offer the chance to receive feedback (Tomlinson, 1998). I have observed that my students are able to learn even better after they receive feedback and understand the mistakes they made. Accordingly, each argumentative short text written by students was given feedback, so they could improve it with no negative consequences on their marks.

Derived from the mentioned SLA principles, the portfolios met some materials development principles that allowed them to accomplish their objectives. The first one was “A rich and meaningful exposure to language in use” (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 12). The material must contain contextualized spoken and written texts. The texts contained in the portfolio were about controversial issues that were related to students’ lives and that were contextualized to facilitate the intention of writing a point of view. The second one was “affective and cognitive engagement” (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 12), in which it is important that students think and feel while they use the target language.

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As I already mentioned, each workshop in the portfolios ended up with the writing of a short argumentative texts, which requires that the teacher facilitates a critical thinking process, defined as a method that involves interpreting, judging and applying multiple criteria to assume a position towards a statement (Pineda et al., 2004). During all the stages of the portfolios, students were provoked to go through the seven levels of cognition postulated by Pineda, et al. (2004), that are involved in a critical thinking process, which are (a) knowledge, related to the ability to remind the required information to solve a problem; (b) interpretation, which deals with the capacity to assimilate information; (c) analysis, which involves to understand principles of organization through breaking down material into its components in order to establish the relationships among those components; (d) inference, which encompasses to recognize the factors that permit rational results; (e) explanation, which is to have the ability to express with well supported ideas the result of our thinking; (f) evaluation, which entails to judge ideas based on solid arguments; and (g) self-regulation that is to monitor the thinking processes.

As students' productions were short argumentative texts, it was essential to keep a critical thinking process all along the development of each activity. Each level was considered from the presentation of the issues until the creation of the argumentative short text. And the third one was "being given opportunities for contextualized and purposeful communication in the L2" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 12), which refers to the language production and use. The activities contained in the portfolios favored the use of written language in an effective and appropriate way. The trigger was contextualized controversial issues that gave the opportunity to communicate with a purpose. During the feedback given by the teacher, there were some adjustments done to improve the accuracy of the texts in terms of the proper use of English.

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Each workshop was prepared bearing in mind students' preferences and the controversial issues were chosen based on students' interests revealed on a survey. As it was already mentioned, students did not enjoy writing, so the production stage was prepared in such a way that students were able to enjoy the process for its simplicity and the possibility of correcting mistakes. They did not have to hand out a finished text, the material was prepared to help students build up the text step by step, from the statement of basic ideas in English, to the short argumentative text.

General and specific instructional objectives. The main objective of the pedagogical tool is to design and implement two workshops included in a portfolio to improve students' argumentative writing skills. I also stated three specific objectives: (a) to guide students' processes to improve their argumentative writing skills in English, while they monitor their own progress, (b) to promote students' critical thinking throughout the argumentation in short argumentative written texts, based on the activities about controversial issues and (c) to describe the role of media sources in students' written productions.

Innovation of the intervention. In regards to how this research study aims at being innovative, I can say that the idea of implementing portfolios for learning a second language at the Marruecos y Molinos School is ground-breaking. I have observed from some English classes, that there is a tendency to implement worksheets taken from commercial workbooks and from internet. The notebook is the most important tool to register the class activities, and the students are not used to using it to follow their own processes. It means that students just do what the teacher says but they have no idea about the purposes, the benefits and the outcomes of the activities.

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Although the English syllabus is based on the Basic Standards from the MEN, which stated that students must develop an argumentative competence (“Estándares Básicos”, MEN, 2006), the truth is that the topics are not focused on developing that competence. Moreover, the idea of implementing controversial issues to learn English, is not considered for students from 8th grade. These kinds of topics are mainly discussed with 10th and 11th grade students. Then, more than just following the syllabus as it is established, I wanted to make decisions based on my students’ needs. That is considered innovation, as this study generated changes in my role as a teacher, by making me a more active agent involved in the proposal and design of topics and activities (Nuñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2012). These authors, also affirmed that “MD constitutes a true resource for teachers to respond to students’ needs and foster institutional innovation in language teaching” (p. 25), and the implementation of the materials that were designed for this study, pretended to change not only the way students learn, but also the way some teachers at my school teach. By having this study done, I built knowledge that now I am able to share with my coworkers.

Nicholls stated that “an innovation is an idea, object or practice perceived as a new by an individual or individuals, which is intended to bring about improvement in relation to desired objectives, which is fundamental in nature and which is planned and deliberate” (as cited in Markee, 2001, p.120). Bearing this statement in mind, the implementation of portfolios in an English class at my school can be perceived as a new idea because it was planned to reach objectives related to the argumentative writing and to a communicative use of English.

According to Karavas-Doukas, innovations are educational features that “are planned to bring about improvement in classroom practice with the ultimate aim of enhancing student

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achievement” (p. 28). At the Marruecos y Molinos School, students’ written productions are deficient, then, the implementation of portfolios was designed to improve students’ argumentative writing skills and writing in itself.

In the same sense, Washor affirmed:

From our perspective, innovation means first different, then better. That is, innovating is a fundamentally different way of doing things that result in considerably better, and perhaps different, outcomes. Both the 'different' and the 'better' must be significant and substantial. Educators need to think of innovating as those actions that significantly challenge key assumptions about schools and the way they operate. Therefore, to innovate is to question the 'box' in which we operate and to innovate outside of it as well as within. (Washor, 2010, para. 4).

Then, helping students from an early age and throughout their whole high school to express an idea in English, with the implementation of the portfolios for developing argumentative writing, they might get to the eleventh grade with a clearer vision of the communicative purposes of English.

Theory of language and language learning. The framework for English classes at Marruecos y Molinos School is based on the self-expression perspective and the Culture and ideology perspective. This was established during a pedagogical session where the Curricular Reorganization by Cycles text by SED, was adapted to the schools’ objectives in terms of learning English. In this material, one of the purposes of learning a second language is to assume a critical position towards the social contexts. To do so, students have to use the language to express feelings, needs, preferences, interests and points of view. This view of the language is

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related to the self-expression perspective, in which students can find personal meaning in the use of English because they use it for pragmatic purposes and to express their thoughts (Tudor, 2001). The SED has argued that one of the objectives of learning a second language is to use English to express and reflect on aspects of students' culture and their global and local contexts (Reorganización Curricular por Ciclos, SED, 2015). This perception deals with the Culture and ideology perspective, in which the socio-cultural aspect of the language has an effect in learners' skills to use English in a contextualized way (Tudor, 2011). These two perspectives are bore in mind in the SED's proposal because the intention there is to favor the building of critical students. According to the SED, students should be aware of their contexts and assume a point of view in order to express in English their ideas.

I have to say that, even though there are some changes being done in terms of teaching at my school, there is still a conflict with the idea of giving a different direction to the purposes of learning English, and the proposal so far is just on the paper. As a consequence, the observable theory of the language at my school seems to be the linguistic perspective, and it seems to be focused just in three of the six categories identified by Cunningsworth, which are grammar, vocabulary and phonology (as cited in Tudor, 2001). In regards to this research study, it was planned to actually bear in mind the self-expression perspective and the culture and ideology perspectives as the portfolios contained activities that aimed at motivating students to write their ideas based on reflections about issues that were related to their culture.

In terms of language learning, this study deals with the functional view, in which according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), "language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning" (p. 21). According to this view, the focus of learning a language is on the semantic and

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communicative dimension, and the grammatical aspects of the language are put aside (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The students' creations of short argumentative texts based on controversial issues, were more focused on communicating an idea based on a valid argument than on the correct use of grammar rules. The grammatical aspect was checked and adjusted during the process, but it was not the purpose of the implementation of the portfolio.

Methodological approach underlying the pedagogical strategy. The methodological approach of my pedagogical strategy is based on the communicative approach, which is a theory that comes from the perception of the language as communication and its goal is to develop a communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). I have insisted that teaching English for communicative purposes is a concern for me. Halliday, (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) elaborated a theory of the functions of language where he presents seven basic functions that are involved in the process of learning a language. The imaginative function was not considered for this study, as the written productions dealt with argumentation, which does not contemplate imagination as a valid argument.

1. The instrumental function, which is the usage of language to obtain things. In the case of this research study, students needed to obtain the information and supported ideas from the controversial issues content.

2. The regulatory function, which is the use of language to control the conduct of others. It is important to keep in mind that one of the purposes of the argumentation is to convince others about a point of view. Although I consider that it is not the same to control and to convince somebody, somehow convincing implies to deal with the behavior of the counterpart during a discussion even in a written form.

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3. The interactional function, which is to manipulate the language to interact with other people. One of the purposes of the portfolios was to favor students' written interactions as some of them were used to do it in some social networks.

4. The personal function, which involves the usage of language to communicate feelings and personal points of view. Of course, writing a short argumentative text implies the usage of the language to express thoughts and personal perceptions about the issue.

5. The heuristic function, which is the practice of the language for learning and discovering purposes. As the intention of this research study was to let students experiment not only with the language but also with their own thoughts about certain issues, the heuristic function was considered.

6. The representational function, which is the usage of the language to share information. The portfolios contained activities that were conceived to help students to communicate not only information, but also points of view.

Apart from Communicative Approach, this research study considered the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and Process Writing. The first one is defined as an approach to learn a second language with two purposes: to teach and learn content and to teach and learn the language (Ruiz & Jimenez, 2009). CLIL offered the possibility of designing activities that made students interact with the language throughout the learning of content, in the only place where they can do it, which is the English class (Dalton, 2011; Pokrivčáková and Malá, 2004). The second one is defined as a process in which writing is perceived as a creative act that needs time and positive feedback to fulfil its objectives (Stanley, 2003). Then, both

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concepts, one related to a language learning approach and the other one related to the writing process itself, merge to support my pedagogical intervention.

One important element of the CLIL that benefited the intention of this study is that some controversial issues, whose purpose was not only to trigger the writing, but also to learn from the presented content and reflect on it, mediated the writing process. In terms of process writing, its stages contributed this research study in relation to the implementation of the designed materials. The stages described by Stanley (2003), were taken into consideration for the development of the activities contained in the portfolios. These stages are (a) Pre-writing, which is the moment when the teacher motivates students to be creative; its most important aspect is to let the ideas flow. This is not a productive stage. (b) Focusing ideas, which is the moment when students write, focusing on meaning rather than the accuracy of the language. The most important aspect here is to find out if the outline of the text is coherent and if there is anything missing or extra to add. (c) Evaluating, structuring and editing, which is the moment to adapt the text focusing on producing a complete text. At this last stage, the teacher plays an important role as he / she helps with the correction of the mistakes and gives suggestions about the organization of the text. The feedback must be given in that way.

Connection of the pedagogical intervention with the research question. Bearing in mind that argumentation is not an easy topic for eight grade students, I designed a group of activities that gave them input information and the chance to put into practice what they understood. This was the first time that they were implementing this kind of materials, and they had never worked with textbooks during their English classes, at least in this school. The content of the portfolios was designed to be identified by students, so they could relate the pictures and

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the topics to their lives outside the school. Rico (2005) claims that “materials will involve different kinds of texts and different media, which the learners can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks” (p. 106). In this sense, the portfolio contained activities with videos, pictures and texts.

Students used the portfolio to learn about and practice argumentation and to develop activities related to two controversial issues, so, to answer research question of this study, it was necessary to develop the pedagogical strategy in the following stages.

Instructional phases. The phases that were followed along this research study started with a survey that helped me to decide about the content of the portfolios. Students selected two options from a list of eight controversial issues, and gave me information related to their perceptions about writing. The controversial issues were based on in-class experiences with different groups, in which we accidentally ended up discussing about social networks and animals in a spontaneous way. I found that those topics were relevant for average eight grade students at my school, and during the planning sessions, I suggested to my coworkers to include those topics in the curriculum. After that, I designed two workshops that contained not only the activities to be developed along the process, but also the indications to write a short argumentative text. All the content that presented the controversial issues was adapted to contextualize them and to make them easier to understand. In the following table, there are the selected topics and the way they shaped the workshops and their lessons:

Table 1
Topic selection

Workshop #1	Workshop #2
Warming up the SOCIAL NETWORKS issue.	Warming up the ANIMALS issue.
Introduction to ARGUMENTATION.	Defining ANIMALS and relating them to students' lives.
Aspects of argumentation and activities to reinforce concepts.	Watching a video about ANIMALS to generate ideas.

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Defining SOCIAL NETWORKS and relating them to students' lives.	Observing images about ANIMALS to generate more ideas.
Watching a video about SOCIAL NETWORKS to generate ideas.	Using PROS AND CONS to establish a point of view: <i>"Should animals be used for researching?"</i>
Observing images about SOCIAL NETWORKS to generate more ideas.	Creating a short argumentative text about ANIMALS: <i>"It is important to allow the use of animals in shows such as circus, bull fighting and animal fights"</i> .
Using PROS AND CONS to establish a point of view: <i>"Are social networks good for our society?"</i>	Receiving feedback, adjusting it, and sharing it with a partner.
Creating a short argumentative text about SOCIAL NETWORKS: <i>"Social networks are bad because they always generate bad discussions in the comments of posts, videos, pics, etc."</i>	
Receiving feedback, adjusting it, and sharing it with a partner.	

The second workshop did not include the argumentation section as it was already worked during the first one. The idea was to implement the same concepts with a second topic and then reinforce the developing of argumentative skills.

The portfolios were outlined within a framework to develop materials proposed by some authors, and included my own contribution to the field. Then, after designing the portfolios, the following phases were to elaborate and have signed an informed consent, to plan a session to sensitize students about what was going to be done, and to implement the materials themselves.

Proposed materials development framework. In terms of the process to develop my materials, I took into consideration some authors that proposed a framework for that procedure. According to the frameworks proposed by Graves (1996), Jolly & Bolitho (1998), Masuhara (1998), Núñez, Pineda, and Téllez (2004), Núñez and Téllez (2009), Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos, and Ramos (2009), and Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2012), the development of new materials involves a cycle that allows the teacher to make an intervention whenever there is a situation that can be overcome by developing new materials. During this process teachers identify a situation that can be explored to find the characteristics of the problems, so they can design and develop

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the materials and make it tangible. Finally, the teachers use it in the classroom and after implementing the materials, they can evaluate the results and make the necessary adjustments.

These frameworks have in common a process that includes three moments. One before implementing the materials, one during the implementation and one after the implementation to evaluate the process. These authors also considered that teachers must be aware of the characteristics of their students, the available resources and the dynamics of the classes, which means, to have in mind that the materials must be pertinent for the population. Likewise, for the design of effective and suitable materials, the post-method pedagogy proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2003) was considered, as the portfolios met the pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility. The portfolios were designed particularly for students from a context with specific characteristics, they were conceived to be easily implemented and they offered the possibility to learn English and argumentation. In this sense, the contribution of this research study and the teachers-developed portfolios to the MD field, has to do with the fact that they were developed considering students' backgrounds and the context of the population.

The selected controversial issues (social networks and animals) were identified as topics that needed to be discussed with students from a survey (see appendix A). At the Marruecos y Molinos school, students use the social networks every day, building their social life and their perception of the society based on what happens there. Additionally, they are exposed to shows that include animals, such a circus that is permanently near the school, and there is also a place where people train pit bulls for fighting. Then, the portfolio and its content was developed bearing in mind that the purpose was to discuss the issues, by using elements of the argumentation to develop argumentative writing skills. The activities and the content were

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evaluated during the process. As students at Marruecos y Molinos school had never used contextualized materials related to argumentation in English, such as the portfolios, there was a moment to adjust the content during the implementation. Observation was essential during this moment, as it was the best way to establish the necessary adjustments to improve the effectiveness of the content. At the end of each workshop, there was a self-assessment section to analyze from students' perceptions the quality of the content, and teachers' observation formats showed elements to evaluate the process.

Informed consent. The first step to carry out this pedagogical implementation was to inform and ask for permission to the coordinators, the principal of the school and the parents of the students (see appendices B and C). During a meeting, the parents of the 802 group were informed about the research study, and they received and signed the informed consents. In this document, parents authorized me to include their children in this process. Only 17 parents attended, so I chose randomly 15 of the 17 consent forms signed to carry out the observation. Even though all students developed the portfolios and received guidance from the teacher, only those fifteen were taken into account for the observation and description of this research study.

Sensitization. During half of a session, students were informed about the implementation of a portfolio and the purposes of those materials. I explained them that the idea was to innovate the way we had been working for the last year and a half. I also told them that the activities contained in the portfolio were part of the syllabus and that they were going to be able to learn how to support an idea in English in a written form. After that, students received their portfolios, and were informed about how to implement them and about the way to carry out the activities.

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Implementation of the materials. The implementation of the portfolios started by asking students to design their covers as they wanted, but following some instructions in terms of the information that was required. They also completed a section of the portfolio that had a Facebook appearance where they wrote information about them. The purposes of this section were, to make students feel the portfolio very personal and unique, and to contextualize the first controversial issue. After that, and along the following sessions, students read the theory related to the argumentation included in the portfolio and carried out some short activities to make them put in practice what they had read. Students also received inside the portfolio some tips for writing argumentative texts and some useful vocabulary. The implementation of the portfolios took 11 sessions of 100 minutes each one during the third and fourth terms. Each workshop took 6 and 5 sessions, and there was a specific purpose for each one.

Once students finished the input related to argumentation, they started with a warming up activity related to the first controversial issue bearing in mind the pre-writing stage of the process writing. Then, students had to write about their relationship with the controversial issue based on some questions, they watched a short video and answered some questions about it, and wrote a short paragraph about their ideas on some pictures related to the controversial issues. After that, they read a list of pros and cons and chose the ones they agreed with and explained their reasons.

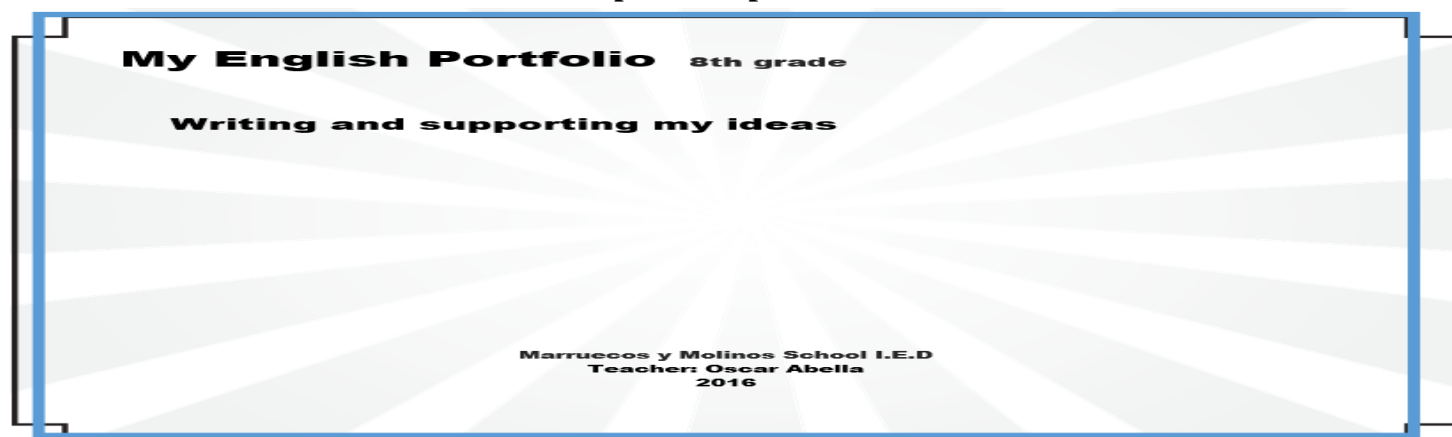
Finally, students received a controversial statement that framed all the previous activities and were asked to write the first draft of their short argumentative text. All these activities were contained in the portfolio and were based on the focusing ideas stage. The first draft received feedback from the teacher, focused on the correct presentation of valid argument and in terms of the organization of the text, so students had the chance to correct and polish their texts. This last

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part was framed within the evaluating, structuring and editing stage of the process writing. To close the workshop, students share their portfolios with some classmates and received some feedback from their partners in the “comments” section. Bearing the self-assessment section in mind, the workshop was adjusted for the second issue. Following this process, the portfolios aimed at enhancing students’ argumentative skills. The whole process was done in both workshops, but with different controversial statements. The first one was “social networks are bad because they always generate bad discussions in the comments of videos, pictures, etc., and the second one was “It is important to allow the use of animals in shows such as circus, bull fighting and animal fights”. Next, there is a sample of the portfolio.

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Sample of the portfolio



Contents

Student's Profile

What is an argument? Why is it important to support our ideas?
What types of arguments can we give?

- Arguments from an authority
- Arguments from Examples
- Arguments about causes

Tips and vocabulary for writing argumentative texts in English

Workshop 1: "Social Networks"

What is a social network?
Positive aspects of Social Networks
Negative aspects of Social Networks

Social networks vocabulary

Activity 1

What is your opinion about the social networks?

Activity 2

Watch the videos and answer the question

Activity 3

Watch the pictures. What do they mean? write your opinion about them

Activity 4

Read the pros and cons for social networks "Are Social Networking Sites Good for Our Society?"Activity

Lesson 1**ARGUMENTATION, FALLACIES AND TIPS FOR WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE TEXTS**

Goal: to familiarize with the concepts of argumentation, fallacies and with vocabulary for writing argumentative texts.

Learning strategies: Over viewing and linking with already known material. Activate previous knowledge

What is an argument?



It is an idea that you give with good and clear reasons to convince people that what you are saying is supported. It is the best source that you can find to support your thoughts.



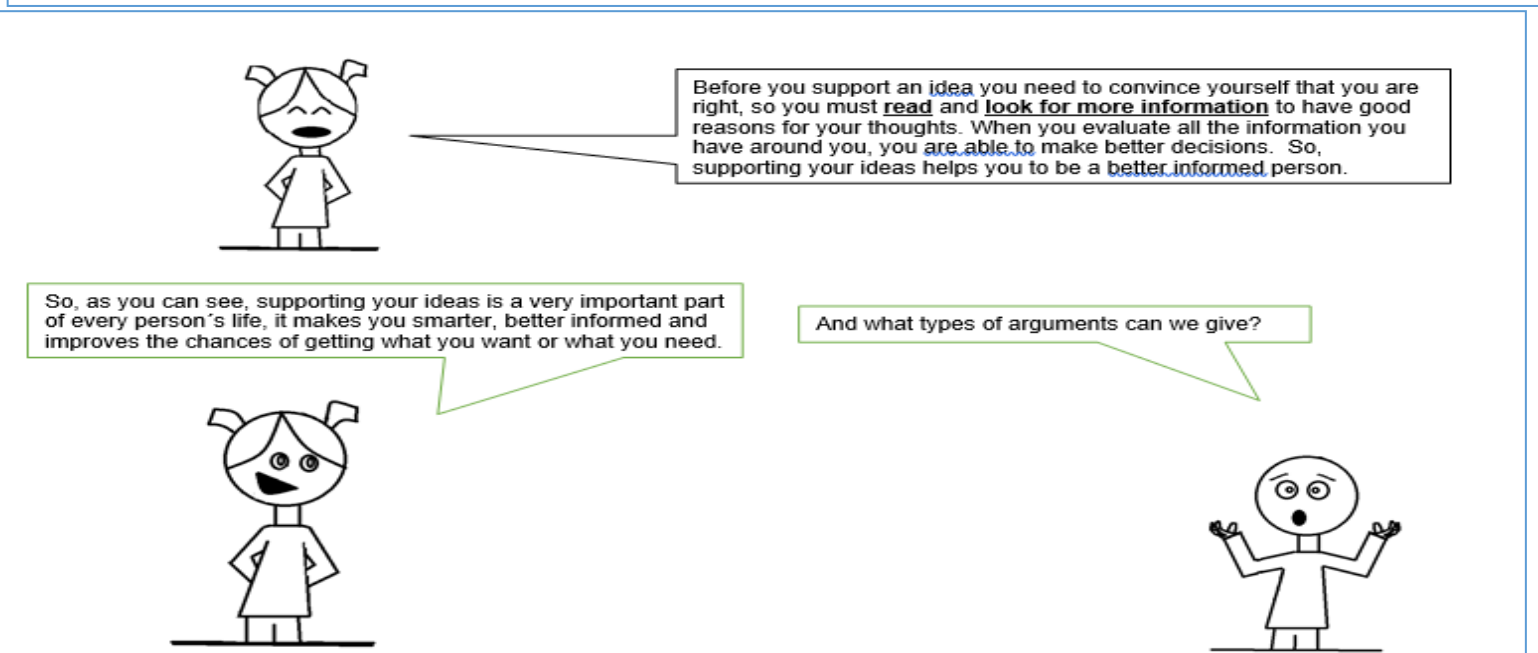
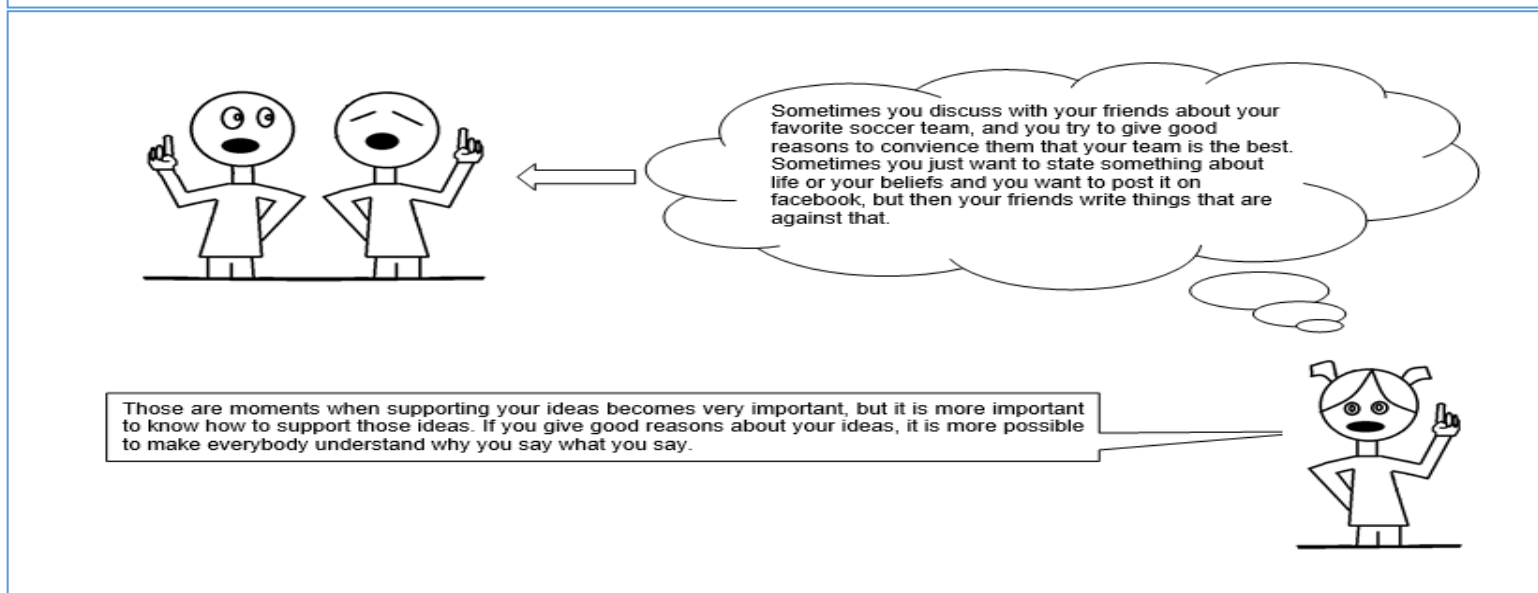
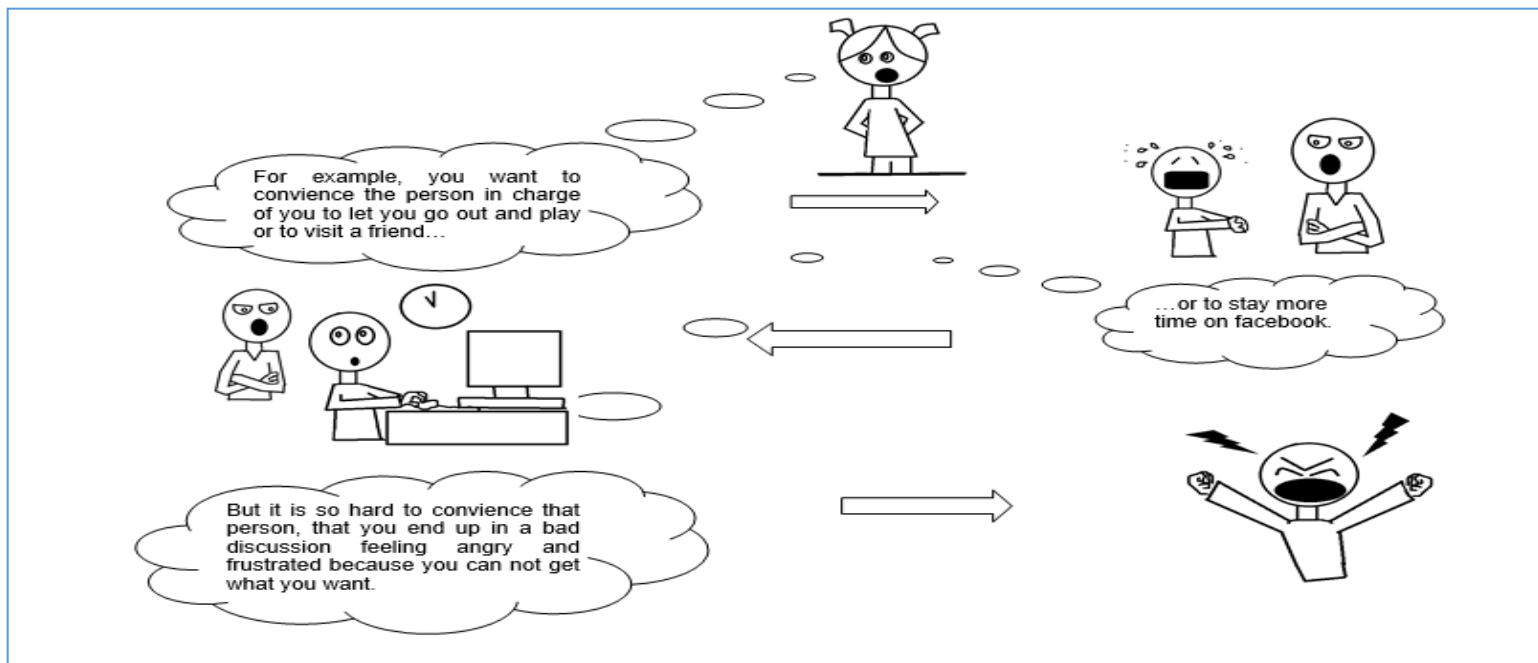
Why is it important to support our ideas?



Imagine yourself in a situation where you need to convince somebody about what you think, but that person has a completely different point of view and does not want to change his / her mind. That happens to you all the time, right? With your parents, with your family, with your friends, with your teachers, with the people you interact with everyday.



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There are different ways to support your ideas. I will explain you some that you can use when you write an argumentative text:

-Arguments from an authority

When you refer to the ideas expressed by a **specialist** on a specific field in order to support your own ideas, you are using an argument from an **authority**.

-Arguments by examples

When you use many **relevant**, **specific**, **verifiable** and **clearly identified** examples, you are using arguments by examples.

-Arguments about causes

When you state that there is a **relationship** between **two events** and one is the **effect** of the other, you are using arguments about causes.



Now, imagine that you are **discussing** with a friend about **soccer in Colombia**. Your friend says that **your favorite soccer team is not the best** and presents you a couple of **ideas to support that statement**. But you want to support why **your favorite soccer team is the best**. Here, you will find some **examples** of each type of argument to support your idea.

-Arguments from an authority

Jose Nestor Pekerman said in an interview, that his favorite soccer team is yours because it wins 80% of the games with an average of 3 goals per game



Arguments by examples

Your team won the Colombian tournament. Your team won the south American tournament. Your team scored more goals than any other team in an international tournament. Your team got more points than any other team in the Colombian tournament.

-Arguments about causes

Your team has the best midfield and the player with more goals scored in the tournament. Then, your team is the best because has the best results.



Activity #1

Write in front of each argument the corresponding type (From an authority, by examples or about causes).

Learning strategy: Over viewing and linking with already known material.



Argument:

1. "For example, not all the birds fly. Chickens are birds, but they do not fly".
2. "I think that the best DC Comics character is "Lobo". Stan Lee, the creator of Spiderman, considers that Lobo is the most interesting DC character".
3. "Mammals drink milk, then cows are mammals".

Type:



Be careful with the fallacies!!!

A fallacy is when you try to support an idea with an argument, but **the argument is not correct**.

1. **Ad hominem:** Never attack the person who thinks different to you, **that is a fallacy defined as "Ad hominem"**.
2. **Anecdotal fallacy:** Never use a personal experience or an isolated example to support your ideas. **That is a fallacy defined as "Anecdotal fallacy"**.
3. **Affirming the consequent:** Never conclude something based only on one evidence, **that is a fallacy defined as "Affirming the Consequent"**.

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Here you have some examples:

Ad hominem "You only listen to Reggaeton music, you don't know about music!"

Anecdotal fallacy "Monsters exist. One day my grandmother told me that she saw one".

Affirming the consequent "Ducks are birds. Ducks swim in the water. Chickens are birds. Chickens swim in the water."

Taken from: http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/eng207-4d/Logic%20and%20Analysis/most_common_logical_fallacies.htm Adapted by Oscar Abella

Activity #2

Write in front of each fallacy the corresponding type (**Ad hominem**, **Anecdotal fallacy** or **Affirming the Consequent**).

Learning strategies: Classifying information with already known material

Fallacy:	Type:
1. "Dogs are aggressive animals because one day a dog attacked me".	_____
2. "You don't like Cristiano Ronaldo. Cristiano Ronaldo Plays soccer. So, you don't like soccer".	_____
3. "You don't understand soccer. Your opinion is not important".	_____

Activity #3

Read the tips and the vocabulary for writing argumentative texts. Draw a line to join the tip to the corresponding equivalent Learning strategies: Classifying information with already known material

There are some considerations that you have to keep in mind if you want to support an idea with good arguments. Here you have some tips that are going to help you in your writing:

a. Write only about the topic and do not write about things that have nothing to do with the issue.	1. Keep the focus
b. Do not invent information.	2. Write real information
c. Include 3 different types of arguments (Arguments from authority, Arguments by examples and arguments about causes).	3. Support your ideas
d. Be sure that your text is clear and interconnected .	4. Write understandable and related ideas
e. Be sure that the text has your opinion about the issue and that it is well supported with reasons	5. Express your point of view
f. Avoid writing fallacies .	6. Make sure your argument is correct

There is some specific vocabulary that you can use in an argumentative text. Here you will find a list of words and expressions to improve your writing

Activity #4

Read the information in columns A, B and C. Then, write the corresponding function of each expression in column D as follows: to exemplify, add information, express an opinion, to conclude, to explain, to disagree, to give reasons, to sequence information, to introduce a reference.

A	B	C	D
Expression or Word	Use	Example	Function
In other words	Use "in other words" when you want to express something in a different way, to make it easier to understand, or to emphasize or expand on a point.	"Frogs are amphibians. In other words , they live on the land and in the water."	
That is to say	Can be used to add further detail to your explanation, or to be more precise.	"Whales are mammals. That is to say , they must breathe air."	
Moreover	Employ "moreover" at the start of a sentence to add extra information.	"Soccer is an interesting sport. Moreover , playing soccer is good for your health."	
I think that...	Use "I think that" to begin a statement in which you include your opinion.	I think that practicing a sport is good for the health.	
According to	Use "according to" to introduce a reference from an authority	According to Mark Zuckerberg, the mission of Facebook is to connect the world"	
Firstly, secondly, thirdly...	This can be used to structure an argument, presenting facts clearly one after the other.	"Basketball is more difficult than soccer. Firstly , you have more rules in basketball. Secondly in basketball you <u>have to</u> move all the time..."	
However,	Use "however" to introduce a point that disagrees with what you've just said.	"The teacher thinks that Messi is the best. However , I think that Ronaldo is better."	
Because	Use "because" to give reasons.	"I don't like Metal music because it is too heavy for me."	
With this in mind,	Use this when you want your reader to consider a point in the knowledge of something else.	"Rock music and Rap music have interesting lyrics. With this in mind, I will explain why I do not like reggaeton."	
For instance,	Use "For instance" to give examples.	"Europe has the best soccer teams. For instance, Barcelona and Real Madrid are considered the best teams in the world".	
In conclusion,	Typically used to introduce the concluding paragraph or sentence of an essay, summarizing what you've discussed in a broad overview.	"In conclusion, the evidence proves that tattoos are not bad for the health"	

Taken from: <https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/articles/words-phrases-good-essays.html> Adapted by: Oscar Abella

PORTFOLIOS TO DEVELOP ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

NOW, YOU ARE GOING TO WRITE YOUR OWN ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT! REMEMBER TO USE ALL THE ELEMENTS THAT YOU JUST LEARNT

SOCIAL NETWORKS



You Tube



Lesson 2

What is a social network?

Goal: To organize ideas about social networks

Activity #1

Answer the following question

In your opinion, what is a social network?

Learning strategies: Taking risks widely. Activate background knowledge.

I think that a social network is _____

Activity #2

Compare your definition with the following one

A **social network** is an online community of **people that share common interests**. They use a website or other technologies to **communicate** with each other and **share information**, like videos, pictures, resources, etc.

Activity #3

Answer the following questions in a short text: What social networks do you use? How often do you check them? What do you like the most about it?

Learning strategies: Taking risks widely. Activate background knowledge.

I use _____
 I check them _____
 I like _____

Activity #4

Watch the video and write 3 ideas about the story

Learning strategy: Seeking practice opportunities. Taking risks widely

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity #5

Watch the pictures. What do they mean? Write your opinion about them.

Learning strategy: Activate background knowledge. Taking risks widely. Over viewing and linking with already known material



https://www.google.com.co/search?q=memes+social+media&espv=2&biw=1366&bih=643&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiPpsnP06PMAhUITSYKHZSmAUJsQ_AUIBiqB

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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Pros

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Cons

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Lesson #3

Goal: To write a short and appropriate argumentative text

Activity #1

Bearing in mind the argumentation, **write an argumentative text** about the following statement. Remember to include **arguments from an authority, by examples and about causes.** You will receive a tablet to look for information if you need it. You can use an additional piece of paper if you need it.

Learning strategies: Activate background knowledge. Taking risks widely. Over viewing and linking with already known material. Use resources.

Activity #2

Write again your text bearing in mind the teacher's observations.

Learning strategy: Asking for correction.

Pro & Con Arguments: "Are Social Networking Sites Good for Our Society?"

Taken from: <http://socialnetworking.procon.org/> Adapted by Oscar Abella

Hand in your text to a partner and ask him to write his/her opinion about your text. Ask them to write if they agree or disagree with you and why. Ask them to use proper arguments

[illegible]

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Writing objectives	Yes	I can do it better
I Write short argumentative texts presenting my points of view		
I Write solid arguments of an authority, of causes and arguments and examples to support my points of view and built argumentative texts		
I avoid the Ad hominem, anecdotal and affirming the consequent fallacies in the texts		
I Write clear and interconnected texts		
I use correct vocabulary for writing argumentative texts		
Learning about controversial issues	Yes	I can do it better
I Write the argumentative texts including relevant information related to social networks		
I Write short argumentative texts establishing a point of view related to social networks		
The lessons in the portfolio	Yes	It can be improved
The content in my portfolio is innovative, diverse, attractive, and interesting.		
The activities in my portfolio made me feel comfortable and motivated.		
My portfolio has interesting controversial issues that are pertinent to my life.		
The social networks, is a topic that makes me want to write.		
The portfolio has different types of activities including videos, images, linking words		
My portfolio helped me to receive feedback from the teacher to improve my performance		
My portfolio contains useful vocabulary to write argumentative texts.		
My portfolio helps me to create short argumentative texts step by step throughout its activities		
The activities in my portfolio are interesting and easy to develop.		

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Procedure

Once I collected the data, I needed a method to analyze and make sense of it. Seliger & Shohamy (1989) affirmed that “the selection of a specific data analysis technique will depend mainly on the nature of the research problem” (p. 201). So, I considered the grounded theory approach, for being the process that involves the organization and analysis of the data to find recurrent patterns that result in research subcategories and categories, and allows the researcher to understand how all the information is related and what it means (Freeman, 1998; Lichtman, 2006; Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003).

To organize the data, I implemented the color coding technique, which consists on the use of different colors to identify keywords, concepts and recurrent patterns, and then facilitate the establishment of categories (Stottok, Bergaus & Gorra, 2011). I validated the information through methodological and theoretical triangulation, which are defined as the processes that permit the analysis of a research inquiry from different points of view and different sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011). With this in mind, I obtained a different view of the information from each instrument I implemented for gathering data. Then, I named and grouped the data and established three categories, based on the constructs of the research inquiry, and they correspond to the patterns observed in videos, students’ self-assessment and teachers’ field notes. Three subcategories emerged from the first and third category, and two from the second one. Next, I present the categories and their corresponding subcategories.

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Research Categories

I identified three categories, the first one with three subcategories, the second one with two and the last one with three as it is presented in the following chart.

Table 2.
Research Categories

Research question: How do the development and implementation of teacher-designed portfolios based on controversial issues enhance 8 th grade students' argumentative writing skills?	
First category: Developing effective and suitable materials	Subcategories -Salient principles underpinning portfolios -Grounding concepts to handle argumentative writing activities -Students' responses towards the portfolios
Second category: Using and learning controversial issues	Subcategories -Relating the controversial issues to students' lives -Assuming a position towards the controversial issues
Third category: Building and developing argumentative writing skills	Subcategories -Nascent argumentative writing skills -Achieving argumentation goals -Meeting argumentative writing skills

Developing effective and suitable materials. The design and implementation of contextualized materials such as the portfolios, caused a positive reaction from students that triggered their commitment to develop the activities, which facilitated their understanding of the argumentation theory and allow them to develop argumentative writing skills. This category is related to how the portfolios and the activities contained in them had a positive response from students, and the impact they had on conceptualizing argumentation. Rogers, (as cited in Ghaderpanahi & Rahimi, 2012) as well as Núñez, Pineda & Téllez (2004), pointed out that learners' needs and interests must be considered when designing materials to engage students and establish a meaningful communication with them. For this study, it was essential that the images, the controversial issues, the activities and everything related to the three selected materials development principals was meaningful and strongly connected to students' lives as the

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argumentation theory is not an easy topic for eight grade students. This category entails three subcategories which are discussed below.

Salient principles underpinning portfolios. According to Tomlinson (2013) the materials designed for learning English must favor a rich and meaningful exposure to language in use, an affective and cognitive engagement, and opportunities for contextualized and purposeful communication in the L2. These principles were driven in the portfolios by the layout, which avoid a possible failure in the development of the activities because of a bad appearance of the materials (Barnard and Zemach, 2003), the relevant and useful content, the pictures, the type of activities and the controversial issues, and it was observed that they met their purposes during the pedagogical intervention. Lamb (2011) stated that “visual appeal is key not only in its ability to grab the interest of your reader but also to help the reader remember the details of your message” (p. 14). Then, the appearance of the portfolios kept students aware towards the content of the portfolios, and helped the learners to understand concepts. The pieces of evidences below describe how these principles emerged during the implementation of the portfolios.

The first activity in the portfolios was a format for students to fill with their personal information. It had a Facebook appearance because the first controversial issue was related to social networks. In this section, students not only completed the information without much help, but they also decorated it to make it look like the real Facebook app without being asked to do it. Tomlinson (1998) pointed that materials must have an attractive content by being innovative, diverse, eye-catching, and interesting, and these characteristics were considered in the two opening activities from each controversial issue.



(Students' artifact No.2)

(Students' artifact No. 1 and No. 2, self-assessment section)

(Teachers' fieldnotes No. 1)

(Rubric)

The opening activity for the second controversial issue, which was related to animal abuse, consisted on a puzzle that students had to solve by cutting and pasting. Although the instruction did not go beyond that, most of them decided to decorate it. The opening activity of the second issue aimed to activate students' imagination and creativity, which resulted in students doing more than they were asked to. These opening activities introduced the topic and contextualized students about the controversial issues. As Tomlinson (1998) asserted, the content of the materials must favor the left and right brain lateralization by involving students intellectually, artistically and emotionally. These two warming up activities offered students a way to approach to a writing activity while exploring their artistic skills.

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In the two students' self-assessment sections contained in the portfolio, students answered "yes" in 14 of 15 formats for the social networks issue (1 student did not complete the format because she did not assist to that class), and 12 from 12 for the "animal abuse" issue (4 students did not complete the format due to the time). These results demonstrated that the selected ESL principles cause a positive effect on students and that the content was appropriate and contextualized. Núñez et al. (2009) explained that it is important to bear always in mind students' voices, so teachers can understand what and how they need to learn. This was the first time that this group worked with portfolios during the English class, so it was paramount to consider their likes and the kind of activities and topics to increase their motivation towards the materials.

Likewise, in the rubrics, students evaluated their own results, and received classmates' and teacher's assessment, concerning how the portfolios contributed to the accuracy of their arguments in the texts. The results confirmed that, for the majority of the texts, the content in the portfolio was useful, and it involved students cognitively and emotionally through the implementation of learning strategies.

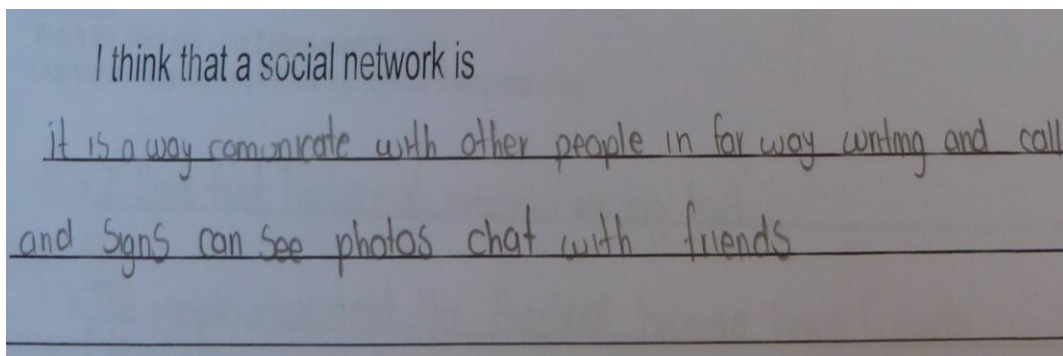
To sum up, desirable materials for language learning should consider MD and ESL principles to guarantee the connection between language, students' lives and their outcomes.

Grounding concepts to handle writing activities. The key to develop students' writing skills is the design of activities that help them to outline their texts, and the inclusion of topics that are directly related to their realities so they feel motivated to write. It is also important to let them explore the writing by focusing on the message rather than the form, and follow the three stages described by Stanley (2003) for developing writing in a second language, which are *pre-writing*, *focusing ideas*, and *evaluating, structuring and editing*. The portfolio included

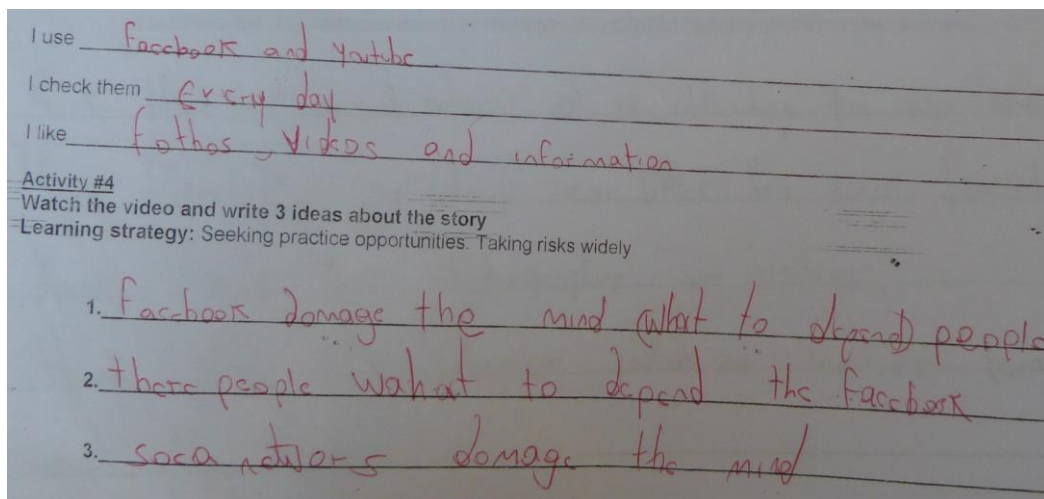
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interesting topics for students that encouraged them to write their ideas based on the argumentation theory, and allowed them to outline their short texts following the process writing stages. In the following evidences, it is presented how the portfolios helped students building an argumentative text.

The controversial issues were the starting points for students to think of a text in English in which they could assume a position and support it considering the argumentation theory.



(Students' artifact No.3)



(Students' artifact No.4)

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1. I think that social networks can produce a business
2. I think that the people exaggerate with the hashtags and utilize for win links
3. I think that we use much instagram for ascend photos and can is photographer
4. I think that meme have reason because is good skip this ad and
can watch videos peacefully

(Students' artifact No.5)

1. I agree because the people can search fast
2. I agree because the people searching job easy and
3. I disagree because the people searching bad the information
4. I disagree because the students searching homework bad
5. I disagree because the individuals search bad information in google
6. I disagree because the students utilize good the social network for step up
7. I agree because the people not are good writing bad words
8. I disagree because the bad people writing in the social network
9. I agree because the bad people discrimination at the fine people
10. I agree because the people search bad information

(Students' artifact No. 6)

Learning strategies: Social networks are bad because they always generate bad discussions in the comments of posts, videos, pics, etc.

I think that the social networks are ~~of~~ ^{not} necessary, but in facebook ^{some} young boys ~~are~~ ^{are} up loaded ^{video} showing ^{their} bodies in the EE.UU one magazine called saturn ^{the} (barbara starr) said that the girls ^{that} show ^{their} bodies what that is bad have very low ~~the~~ morals and do not ^{love} ~~him~~ ^{themselves}

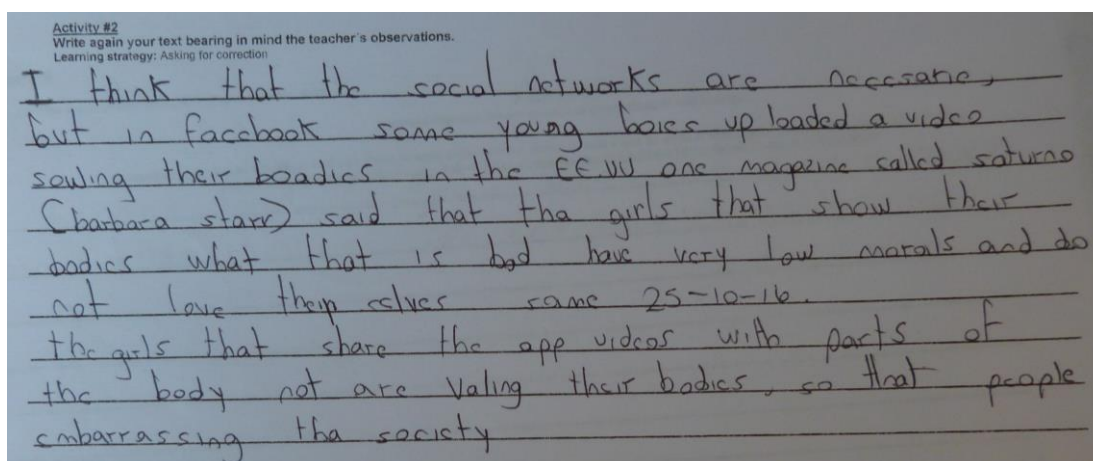
same, 25-10-16

the girls that share the ~~app~~ ^{video} the parts of the body not ^{are} ^{are} valuing ^{their} bodies, so that people what ~~that~~ ^{are} ^{are} embarrassed ^{for} the society.

100 1' days

(Students' artifact No.7)

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(Students' artifact No. 8)

To contextualize students, the first activities for each section asked them about their relationship with the issue and, after watching a video, they wrote their impressions in very short lines. These activities correspond to the pre-writing stage. Then, students wrote their opinion about some images and assumed a position after reading, choosing and defending some pros and cons related to the issue. These activities looked forward assisting students to clarify their ideas about the issues. After that, students had to create a first attempt of argumentative short text bearing in mind the given input. This part corresponds to the *focusing ideas* stage and the main objective was to clarify concepts and let the message flow regardless the grammar because the teacher would help students to polish their product. Finally, students evaluated, structured and edited their texts to obtain a short argumentative text in English.

Consequently, the activities in the portfolios kept students focused on one specific issue because every exercise was related, in this case, to the social networks, and each one was more complex than the previous one, which assisted students on the building of a text in a foreign language. This structure responds to the parts that Martín & Cárdenas (2014), said that a progress portfolio must have: an introductory section, an academic works section, and an assessment section. Students found this structure useful in their written productions as question fifteen in the

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self-assessment section, asked if the portfolio helped creating short argumentative texts step by step throughout its activities; most of students answered “yes” in both sections. These sections also reported that the controversial issues were topics that made students want to write, and that the portfolio contained useful vocabulary to write argumentative texts.

The lessons in the portfolio	Yes	It can be improved
My portfolio helps me to create short argumentative texts step by step throughout its activities	10	2
My portfolio helps me to create short argumentative texts step by step throughout its activities	14	1
The social networks, is a topic that makes me want to write.	15	
My portfolio contains useful vocabulary to write argumentative texts.	15	

(Students' artifact No. 3, No. 4, No 5 and No. 6, self-assessment section)

Vocabulary also played an important role in the development of students' texts because some of them did not know certain words and did not have dictionaries, so they ended up stuck. Nevertheless, the portfolio provided related words and sentences to be completed that allowed them to continue writing, therefore, some texts were too similar. Although some students depended too much on the dictionary, the words in the input activities helped them to increase their vocabulary and to create their texts following common words.

HC, AO and LB finished very quickly, but in general students were asking me for vocabulary, many of them did not bring dictionary, which made it more difficult to finish the activity. AN asked me how to spell “twitter”. I asked him when was the last time he saw that word and he realized that the logo was in the portfolio. LB also asked me how to spell “communicate” in English, and that word was in the portfolio. I asked her to check the definition of social network in the portfolio and she found the word there. They finished writing their ideas about their videos very quickly. All the texts were similar due to the vocabulary given in the portfolio, except for AN, HC and LB, they were not only different but also well done. [sic]
(Teachers' fieldnotes No. 2)

Item	Student			Classmate			Teacher		
	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially
The text is understandable	14	1		13	2		12		3
The text is understandable.	15			13	2		10	1	6

(Rubric)

The rubrics also confirmed that students could build understandable writings thanks to the activities and the *structuring and editing* phase, in which teacher helped them polishing their

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texts not only in terms of grammar, but also to make them more comprehensible. Nevertheless, during the writing of the second text, few students had some complications to make their ideas clear, because time was not enough for me to work on all students' texts. So, I first focused on the texts written by the students from my sample, I helped all of them, and then I worked with the rest of the students.

To conclude with this sub-category, it was observed that the design of materials for developing writing skills, requires the inclusion of topics relevant for the learners and activities that include vocabulary that they can use in their productions and that favor the building up of their texts, starting with short sentences and ending up with complete texts. It was also remarkable that the activities flow better and the results are more satisfactory when the grammar aspect is considered as the last step.

Students' responses towards the portfolios. Contextualized materials and activities that help students feel comfortable with the use of English, favor their written productions. According to Núñez et al. (2009), it is important to consider students' voices, so teachers can understand what and how they need to learn. When teachers understand students' needs, the outcomes are meaningful because students are dealing with something that is related to them. The portfolios caused positive responses from students, even from those who were not interested in the English classes, and their commitment with the development of the activities arose during the intervention. When the activities are too long or repetitive students' motivations decrease, so it is important to intercalate the classes and not to use the same materials every single class. The following evidences describe students' reactions towards the portfolios.

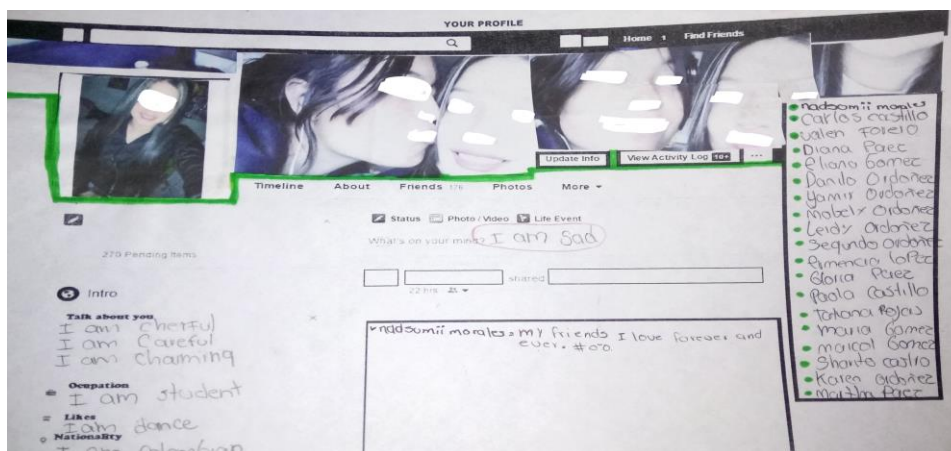
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During the development of the first activity of the social networks' section, all students responded positively to the Facebook's appearance. Two questions of the self-assessment asked students if the activities in the portfolio made them feel comfortable and motivated, and if the activities were interesting and easy to develop; only 1 student answered "no".

The activities in my portfolio are interesting and easy to develop.	14	1
The activities in my portfolio made me feel comfortable and motivated.	14	1

(Students' artifact No.7, No. 8, self-assessment section)

They used the facebook's profile as it was the real app, some of them brought pictures printed and tried to translate what they usually write on their partners' walls.



(Students' artifact No.9)

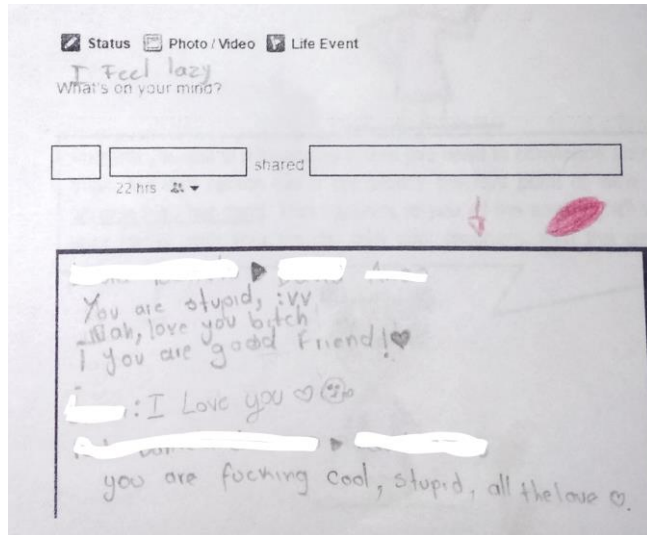
They look very happy writing on their partners' walls. They are asking for some vocabulary to write for their partners' walls. (...) She told me that she didn't know how to write "marica, la quiero mucho", I told her that instead of using that word she could use "dude", "baby" or "friend". HC and PR asked me if they could bring more information from their homes, I answered yes. The rest of the class agreed with this proposal. V draw hair on the head of one of the characters. I asked her why and she said that it was sad to see him bald... we laughed. Another student asked me if she could draw glasses on the father of the examples, I said "this is your portfolio, you make the decision". She replied: my dad has glasses, so I'll draw glasses. [sic]

(Teachers' fieldnotes No. 3)

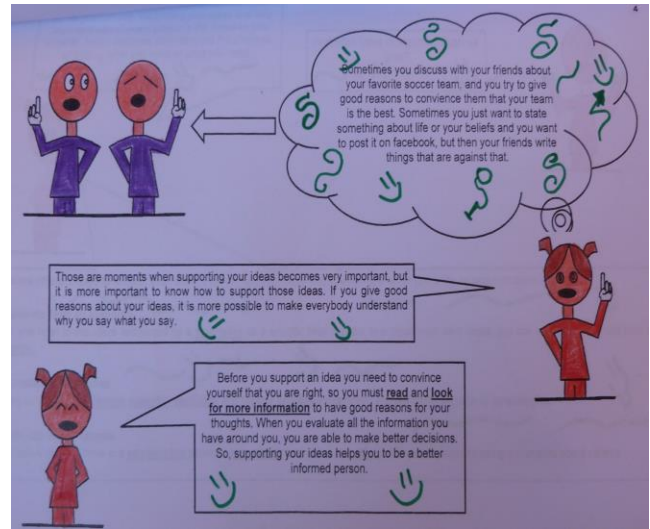
Students looked confident, involved and motivated with the implementation of the portfolios and they were at ease using the materials as they wanted. They looked connected with

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the pictures, they wanted to complement the materials with extra information and made of the portfolios something valuable for them.



(Students' artifact No.10)



(Students' artifact No. 11)

Item			Student			Classmate			Teacher		
			Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially
The name of the authorities, and the books or webpages are cited	15				14	1		11	2		2

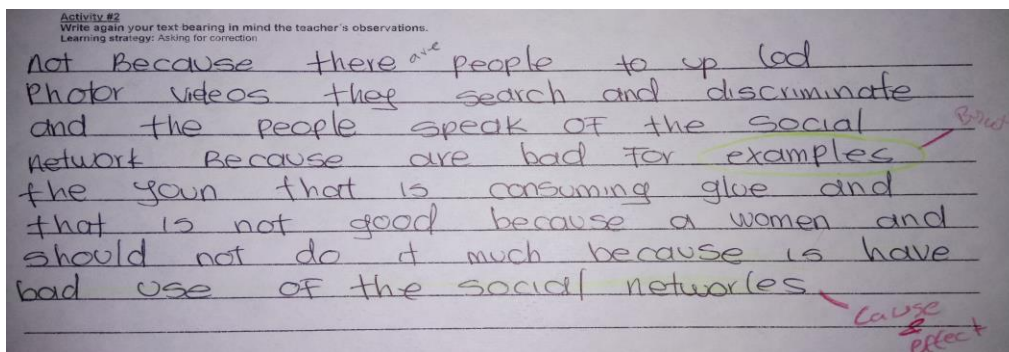
(Rubric)

The rubrics also reported that students' reactions towards the content was positive because it generated knowledge. The participants recognized in their own texts some elements such as the citation of sources, which demonstrated that the concepts in the portfolios were assimilated.

Even during the writing activities, some students that usually do not work in class at all, developed interesting texts. The following participant, for example, did not have good academic results in any subject, but during the implementation of the portfolios showed commitment. She finished the two short argumentative texts, which means that the portfolio had a content that all students found interesting and worth it to be done.

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AO is creating interesting ideas and working hard bearing in mind her low interest in regular classes. [sic] (Teachers' fieldnotes No.4)



(Students' artifact No.12)

To conclude with this sub-category, the participants evidenced a positive concept about the portfolio and its content because they carried out all the activities and their written productions showed the inclusion of the concepts contained in the materials.

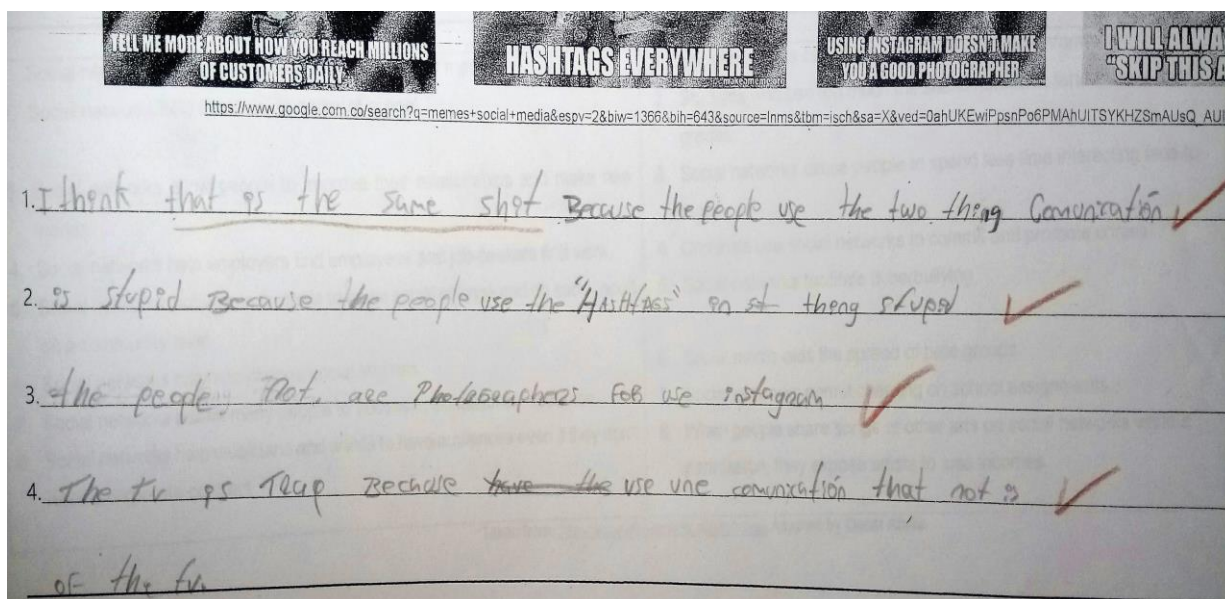
Using and learning controversial issues. Even if students are from eight grade, they can assume and present a point of view regarding a controversial issue when the topic is directly related to their lives. They looked engaged by the discussion and assimilated that there were many sources that they could consult to look for extra information and then, participate and share their thoughts. The participants went through a process that involved interpreting, judging and applying multiple criteria to assume a position towards the two controversial statements. Pineda et al. (2004), described this procedure as carrying out critical thinking processes, which is the way students defined their opinion about the controversial issues, to expose them in a short argumentative text.

Students relating the controversial issues to their lives. The success of the topics in the portfolios was evidenced in how students showed connection to the controversial issues by relating what was in the content to their lives outside the school. This connection allowed

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learners to assume a position that generated their need to express it, in this case in a written form. Finally, students looked for extra information related to the controversial issues to support their ideas, in the sources that they usually consult, as internet. Next, I present the evidences of how students related the controversial issues to their lives.

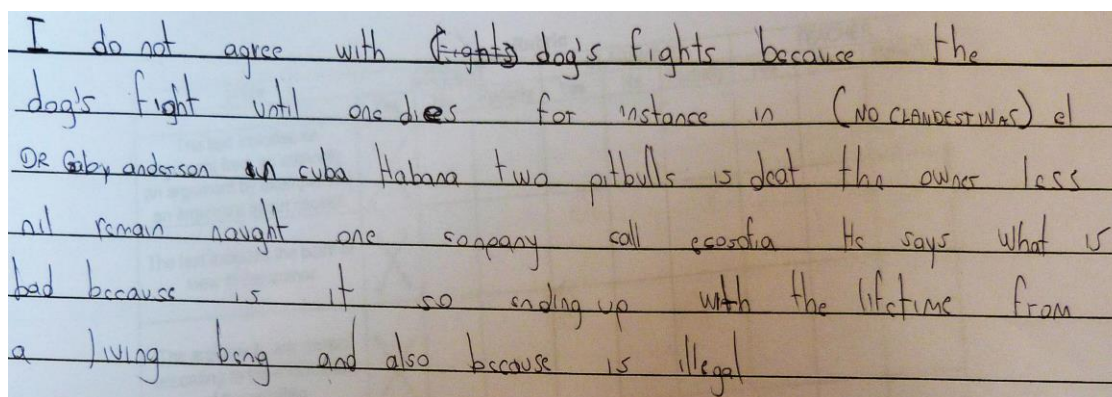
The content and the design of the portfolios were conceived for making the participants feel like their lives outside the school had been inserted in the English classes, and their reactions towards the controversial issues showed that it worked. They had previous concepts in relation to the controversial issues, for example, the images (memes) are immerse in their lives, so they activated the knowledge that they had built outside the school and connected it to the purpose of the class, which was to motivate them to write in English. Students had opinions towards the issues and expressed them with a critical position, which means that they took part in the discussion because it was meaningful and related to their lives.



(Students' artifact No. 13)

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Most of the references included in the texts were taken from internet, and students looked for this information at home, which means that they were not only connected to the controversial issues but they also used their regular information sources to support their ideas.



(Students' artifact No.14)

One of the question in the self-assessment, asked if the portfolio had interesting controversial issues pertinent to students' lives and most them answered "yes" for both topics.

My portfolio has interesting controversial issues that are pertinent to my life.	12	
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(Students' artifact No. 9, self-assessment section)

One of the activities related to animal abuse, included a The Simpsons' episode in which Lisa, one of the main characters, decides to go vegetarian. Here, WO and AN demonstrated that the topic was relevant and a daily concern for them outside the school.

WO said that sometimes when he is eating meat, he feels like he is eating something that is alive. AN asked why we eat meat. And added that he would like to stop eating meat, but that it is impossible for him. [sic]
(Teachers' fieldnotes 4)

Finally, according to the rubric, only one student did not find a classmate's point of view in the texts, which means that the rest of the participants found a relationship between the social networks issue and their lives.

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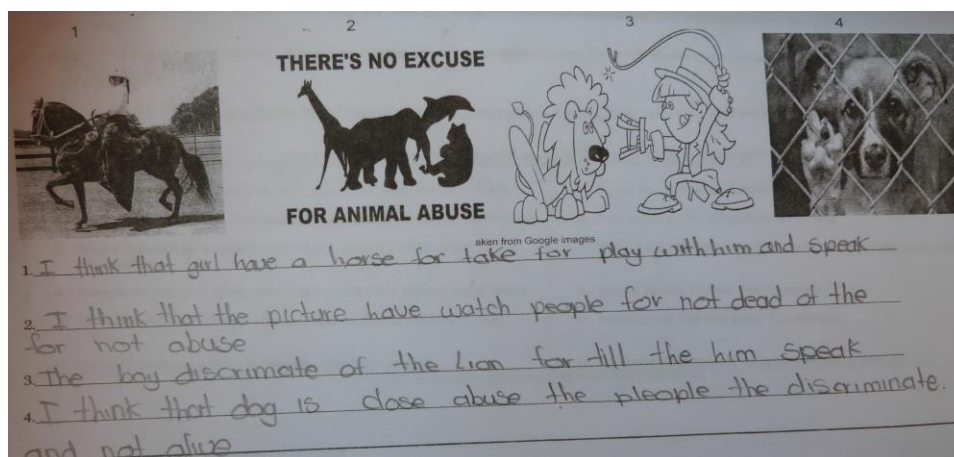
Item	Student			Classmate		
	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially
The text includes the point of view of the author	15			14	1	

(Rubric)

Summarizing, this sub-category emerged from the relations that the portfolios facilitated between the issues and students' lives. This relation was crucial to write an argumentative text.

Assuming a position towards the controversial issues. The controversial issues were part of students' lives, they were used to communicate through Facebook and to be surrounded by animal abuse, but they had never reflected on those topics at a formal level. The portfolio and its topics were what was required to motivate students to reflect on the issues and express a point of view. The evidence below explains how the portfolios helped the learners to generate a point of view towards the controversial issues.

The inclusion of expressions such as "I think that", "I agree" and "I disagree" in the vocabulary and expressions section of the portfolios, favored that students assumed a position towards the issues and exposed it in the texts. After the videos, the images, and the pros and cons activities, students presented their views, which were clear and strong positions, and although there were grammar and consistency problems in their writing, it was clear that they wanted to express themselves.



(Students' artifact No. 15)

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In the self-assessment section one of the questions asked if the participants were able to include their points of view in a short text and all of them answered “yes”.

I Write short argumentative texts establishing a point of view related to social networks	12	
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(Students’ artifact #10, self-assessment section)

Even during the teacher’s presentation of the topic, students expressed their opinion orally and in Spanish, so the fact that they were asked to do it in a written text and in English, created a bridge between their thoughts and the learning of English.

-.CAV said: I think that it is stupid to say that we have to respect animals while we eat them. [sic]

(Teachers’ fieldnotes 5)

The rubric proved that students’ points of view were included in the texts, which indicates that the controversial issues motivated the participants to write because they wanted to express their ideas.

ITEM	STUDENT			CLASSMATE			TEACHER		
	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially
The text includes the point of view of the author	15			14	1		15		

(Rubric)

To sum up, the portfolios facilitated that the participants reflected, assumed a position, support their ideas and shared them with their classmates. For doing this, they needed information from different sources, different types of activities, and from different points of view to build strong basis that support their thoughts.

Building and developing argumentative writing skills. When students receive proper input about a controversial issue that is connected to their lives, throughout attractive and contextualized activities, their interest and motivation for stating their thoughts is activated. At that point, the teacher must introduce argumentation, which Weston (2009) defined as the suitable way to support an idea with reasons, so learners can start developing argumentative

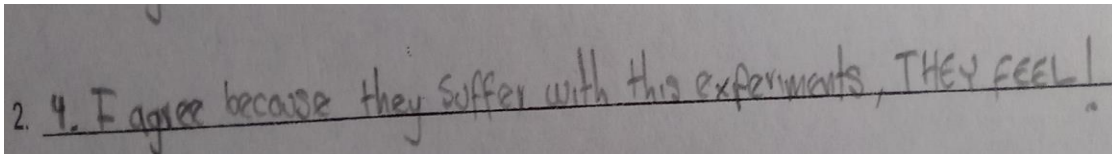
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skills. Asking them to support those ideas in a text is a good option to help them not only to organize their ideas, but also to favor the learning and production of the English language. They can write short but well supported ideas that lead them to develop argumentative writing skills.

The design of the portfolio and its activities guaranteed the passage through the three levels of basics of argumentation described by Leshowitz, DiCerbo and Syminton (as cited in S-Team, 2010): the *Pseudo-knowledge*, was explored when students started to assume a position towards the controversial issues without considering if their arguments were correct; the *Destabilized knowledge* happened when the activities led them to wonder if the quality of their arguments corresponded to what was exposed in the concepts in the portfolios; and the *Reasoned knowledge* was evidenced in students' productions, where they tried to give well-founded and self-developed written arguments. Next, these levels are evidenced in each one of the instruments implemented.

Nascent argumentative writing skills. The development of argumentative writing skills was evidenced when students started to give reasons to support their opinions in a written form. The first supported ideas were based on participants' personal experiences, but they started to organize their thoughts towards the controversial issues by using the tools that the portfolios offered. This evidence did not reflect proper arguments because they did not have all the elements they must have, but they were basic and short supported ideas, which confirmed that students can express their ideas, presenting them in a disorganized way though (Hillocks, 2011). At first, students had problems with some concepts, but as they were identifying arguments, they assimilated the basics of the theory of argumentation. The following evidence presents how students started to build argumentative writing skills.

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(Students' artifact No. 16)

The Pros and Cons activity helped students to find reasons to support their thoughts. They could contrast two positions towards one single idea, assume a position, write it down, and support it, mostly using “because”. In the case of the example above the topic was the use of animals in experiments, and the student supports why he agreed that animal testing is cruel and inhumane, in contrast to the statement that supports that as animals do not have rights, it is acceptable to experiment on them.

I use correct vocabulary for writing argumentative texts	12	
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(Students' artifact No. 11, self-assessment section)

To evidence if students were starting to develop argumentative writing skills, the vocabulary in their writing should include words that connected their points of view with their reasons, and one of the self-assessment questions asked about this, finding positive results.

PR says to her partner that the affirming the consequent fallacy is just like the arguments about causes but the other way around. I repeated those words to the rest of the class, but students looked confused, I used again the example about Bob Marley. I told them that if somebody tell them that they are pothead just because they listen to Bob's music, it was a fallacy. They were like “ooooohhhh right!!”

(Teachers' fieldnotes 6)

Students also got to conclusions that allowed them to identify fallacies and arguments based on the information contained in the portfolio and teachers' clarifications.

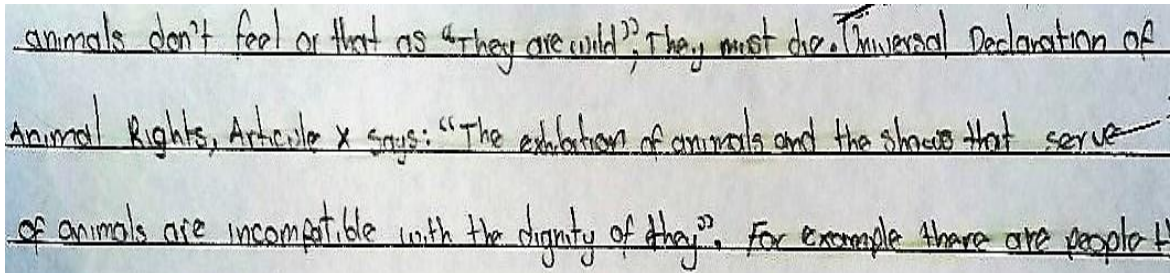
The information is verifiable.	15			15			11	2	2
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(Rubric)

The rubric confirmed that students understood that a good argumentative text includes the references of the information that they use to support their ideas, which means that they were

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starting to develop argumentative writing skills. Finally, although the citation was not formal, they included information that allowed the reader to confirm that the reference was not invented. For instance, in the following image, the student refers to the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights and includes the article and its corresponding citation.



(Students' artifact No.17)

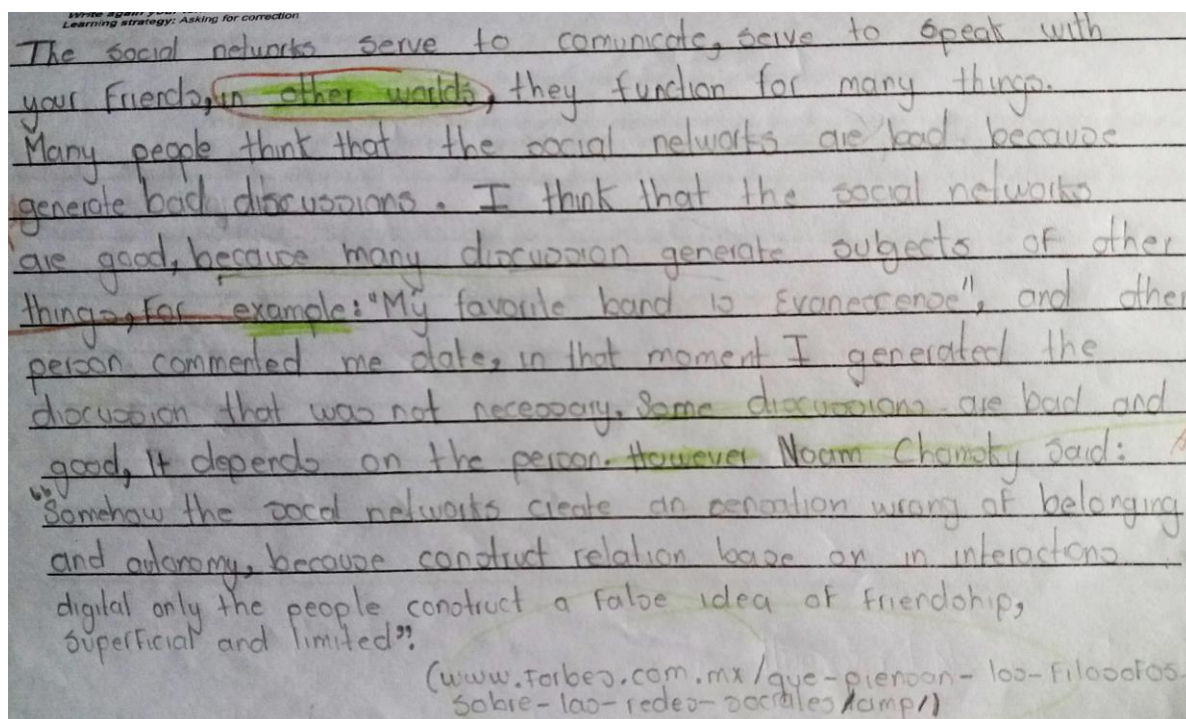
To conclude with this subcategory, the data allowed me to assure that students develop argumentative writing skills when they present elements that are the beginning of a solid argument in their texts. They can be introduced into the argumentation theory by boosting the basic way they have to support their ideas.

Achieving argumentation goals. After the participants established a basic way to support their points of view, they identified the purposes of argumentation and elaborated short texts that included their ideas with, at least, two valid arguments. They grounded the argumentation concepts and used them to make their texts more accurate, avoiding the use of fallacies, which was a term that became familiar to them. Students included in their texts arguments from an authority, which are the ones that are based on the citation of an author, arguments by examples, which are the ones that are based on many different examples, and arguments about causes, which are the ones based on a proposal of the relation between a cause and its effect (Padilla, et

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al., 2011). The evidence below demonstrates how students used their short argumentative texts, to impact the readers and convince them to validate their points of view.

All the final texts, some with consistency problems, had elements that evidenced that students' purpose was to convince the reader that their point was valid, by using the argumentation fundamentals, and the vocabulary that the portfolio offered. Even the language in the texts was formal, which means that students tried to impact the reader with an appropriate use of the language.



(Students' artifact No. 18)

The learners used sentences to include common and popular ways to perceive the world (like what circuses mean), and then they used elements of argumentation to oppose them with a critical and solid point of view. This was the way students connected the reader to the text, to state their point of view.

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The people think that the only way to have fun to the other is abusing the animals, knowing that there are other forms to have fun. The circus is a place for "have fun" while, in reality only see a form of abuse toward us. "Moreover there are people that, call lover of the animals, have as sport the hunting and, in occasions, are capable of sacrifice to his dogs when now them to give usefulness." For example, a video (Burning a dog) that there are in youtube, demonstrate the form in the wich kill a animal, this is inhuman. "The culture of people is measured by the way they treat the animals" - Guillem Molins Ceppedes //elpais.com/elpais/2015/04/01/opinion/1429906526-738464/html.

(Students' artifact No. 19)

Besides, one of the purposes of teaching argumentation is that students do not fall in fallacies when supporting their ideas, and according to the self- assessment section and some annotations during the implementation, most of the participants conceptualized and avoided them.

I avoid the Ad hominem, anecdotal and affirming the consequent fallacies in the texts	12	
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(Students' artifact No. 12, self-assessment section)

"EC asked me if he could reference a couple of friends, I asked him if they were authorities, he answered no, so I asked him, what it was and he answered: a fallacy".

(Teachers' fieldnotes No. 6)

Finally, students, classmates and the teacher concluded that most of the final texts did not include any fallacy, it was reflected on the rubrics' information.

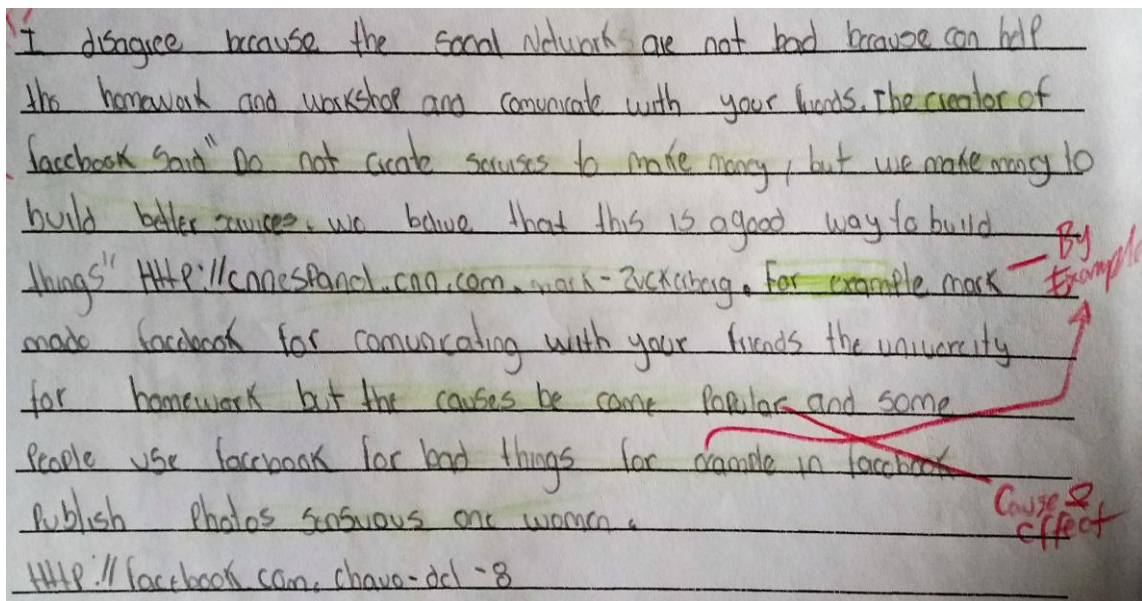
Item	Student			Classmate			Teacher		
	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially
The text has fallacies.		15			15			13	2

(Rubric)

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To sum up, this subcategory explained how the majority of the participants' texts reached the purposes of argumentative short texts because they took into consideration all the concepts in the portfolios to convince the readers, by avoiding the fallacies that they usually resort to.

Meeting argumentative writing skills. All the participants supported their ideas in a short text, which means that they developed the group of skills required to elaborate and perform in a written form, an idea based on the fundamentals of argumentation. Their texts evidenced that they developed skills to communicate their ideas in a more critical way, supporting their points of view with reasons, which Weston (2009) defined as argumentation. The following evidences confirm that the notions were understood and students were aware of the importance of expressing their points of view, giving support to their ideas with true evidence from authorities, examples and cause and effect relationships.



(Students' artifact No. 20)

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Most of the final versions of students' texts included at least two from the three types of arguments studied during the intervention. The cause and effect argument was difficult for the participants to assimilate and is was not as common in the texts as the other two. Nevertheless, all the texts included arguments based on the content of the portfolios. In the sample above, the student identified the creator of Facebook as an authority in terms of social networks, provided a valid example, and established a cause and effect relationship. The texts reflected that most of the learners developed skills that allowed them to identify and incorporate the key elements of an argumentative text.

During the implementation of the first controversial issue, students found difficult to assimilate and include the arguments in their texts, but during the second issue they were more familiarized with the concepts. The following samples belong to the same participant, and they show how in the first text, it is mentioned the same authority as most of the other students, while in the second one, are not only presented exclusive sources, but there are also two.

I think that the social ~~networks~~ is a in place to sale, to date, to organize events. (marck Zuckerberg) said that the students from universities exchange on to information' www.wikipedia.com/facebook. 25/10/16

(Students' artifact No. 21)

the president Juan Manuel Santos sanctioned the law against the Animal suffering law amended the article 655 the civil code the animals receive protection against the abuse the pain" www.El pais.com.co 09/11/16. for instance Cesar Millan talked the suffering that is not authorize

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(Students' artifact No.22)

Writing objectives	Yes	I can do it better
I Write solid arguments of an authority, of causes and arguments and examples to support my points of view and built argumentative texts	12	
I Write solid arguments of an authority, of causes and arguments and examples to support my points of view and built argumentative texts	6	9

(Students' artifact No. 13 and No. 14, self assessment section)

The fact that they assimilated the notions and incorporated them in a short text, required the development of argumentative writing skills. The self-assessment section evidenced that there was an improvement in using arguments from the first text to the second one.

"LB says that she is confused because she thinks that the social networks are good, but she found an argument that is against that and she thinks that it is correct, so I asked her to check her point of view. She ended up including the reference in the text and redirecting her ideas".

(Teachers' fieldnotes No. 6)

Students assimilated the concepts of argumentation and the importance of giving consistency to their thoughts. They inquired about the issues and their findings made them strengthen and reaffirm their ideas, or even change their mind, as it was observed in the previous sample from the teacher's fieldnotes.

Item	Student			Classmate			Teacher		
	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially	Yes	No	Partially
The text includes an argument from an authority, an argument by example and an argument about causes.	15			14		1	12		3

(Rubric)

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The rubric also confirmed that students, classmates and the teacher found that the arguments were included in the text.

With this last sub-category, it was evidenced that learning argumentation in eight grade is not easy, but with the proper design of materials and activities, the right controversial issues that generates an opinion, and teacher's accompaniment, it is possible to help students to support those ideas at a more formal way.

All the information presented in this chapter corresponds to the highlights of the intervention, which allowed me to define categories and subcategories related to the constructs of my research question. The following chapter contains the conclusions of the analysis of all the collected data in relation to my research question and its constructs.

Chapter V

Conclusions and pedagogical Implications

Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to analyze how the design and implementation of portfolios favored eight grade students' development of argumentative writing skills throughout the discussion of two controversial issues. To do so, I gathered data from the selected instruments and after organizing and categorizing the information, I analyzed the evidence obtained to get to some conclusions. In this chapter, I present the findings that emerged from the categories previously described.

Concerning the first category, the study showed that the materials and its content were effective because the portfolios facilitated to students their approach to the concepts of argumentation and fallacies, increasing the chances of obtaining argumentative short texts. Additionally, students responded positively to the materials, and the MD and SLA principles taken into account, were pertinent. This means that the portfolio was effective and suitable because its activities had rich and meaningful exposure to language in use, the controversial issues generated affective and cognitive engagement, and the production of short texts offered opportunities for contextualized and purposeful communication in the L2 (Tomlinson, 2013). In terms of the second category, the data showed that the controversial issues triggered students' needs of expressing a point of view, and were topics that allowed the apprentices to learn how to

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inquire from different sources. Students interpreted, judged and applied multiple criteria to assume a position towards the two controversial statements, which according to Pineda et al. (2004) is defined as a critical thinking process. Then, this kind of topics can be discussed with young learners and establish a starting point to develop argumentative writing skills. Regarding the third category, students developed argumentative writing skills thanks to the progressive building of their writing in English and the input that allowed them to understand the basics of argumentation. The learners elaborated their texts criticality including arguments in favor or against the controversial statements using the three types of argumentation included in the portfolios. Hillocks (2011) pointed out that students can express their ideas to state, for example, that something is unfair, but the writing of an argumentative short text helped them to learn that supporting their thoughts in an organized way. This implies the presence of authorities, strong and relevant examples and cause and effect arguments, being the last ones the more difficult to assimilate.

The development of the activities included in the portfolios were something that seemed to make students feel happy and devoted. Regarding the controversial issues, the participants looked pleased to have the chance to express themselves about topics that are not normally discussed with teachers, and the controversy was something that triggered their need to write. Even though the language could have been a problem, they wanted to let the class and the teacher know their perception.

Finally, the argumentation was a topic that students assimilated faster and better than I thought. They started implementing terms as “fallacy”, “authority”, “example” and “relevant”,

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which is vocabulary that was contained in the portfolios at its introductory part, and shaped short argumentative texts by developing argumentative skills.

Pedagogical Implications

After organizing and stating the results of my pedagogical implementation, and describing the main conclusions about students' short argumentative texts and their experience using portfolios with controversial issues, I want to motivate English teachers to develop their own materials based on students' needs and likes. I want them to consider the inclusion of argumentation as the core and main objective of the learning of English because it favors the use of the language for communicative purposes and makes students be aware of the importance of solving the differences throughout the dialogue and by supporting their ideas. I also want to invite teachers to feel confident with the discussion of controversial issues with their students, even if they are young learners, because they will always have something to say, and those opinions help us to understand their contexts and what is on their minds, so it is an effective way to converse and guide students towards those topics that are part of their lives, but that are reserved for more advanced levels. English should be taught with social, education, and cultural purposes, giving to students the chance to connect their worlds outside the classroom with the class (Clavijo, 2001). In contexts like the one where I carried this study out, students face difficult situations since they are very young, so it is important to give them the chance to discuss and communicate their ideas.

Limitations

Concerning the challenges I faced during this study, the most relevant was that time was not enough. Although we finished the implementation of the portfolios, there were some

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activities that might have impacted students in a deeper way if we had had more time. Learning argumentation is a complex and long process that requires time and hard work, but the results are interesting and benefit students' processes. Reading, analyzing and evaluating students' texts was also time demanding considering the number of students and the time I had to implement the portfolios.

Questions for Further Research

During the progress of this study, the following inquiries emerged, which could be a starting point for new research projects: how does the implementation of writing portfolios enhance students' oral arguments? And, how does the implementation of teacher design portfolios favor students' critical thinking skills throughout written interaction?

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Appendix A

Colegio Marruecos y Molinos I.E.D
Curso 802
English class
English Teacher: Oscar Abella

Encuesta

Gracias por tu participación en la siguiente encuesta. Ésta se realiza para conocer tu nivel de escritura en inglés, para saber qué tanto sabes sobre la argumentación y para que con tu opinión y tus preferencias me ayudes a preparar el material con el cual trabajaremos durante el tercer y el cuarto periodo. La información recolectada será utilizada solamente con propósitos investigativos y se mantendrá anónima. Con esta información desarrollaremos los portafolios de los cuales les hablé la clase pasada. Por favor, responde de manera sincera las siguientes preguntas escogiendo una o varias opciones según la indicación en cada punto.

1. En escala de 1 a 5, en donde 1 es muy poco y 5 es bastante, ¿Qué tanto te gusta escribir en inglés?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
2. Consideras que tu escritura en inglés es:
 - a. Excelente
 - b. Buena
 - c. Regular
 - d. Deficiente
3. ¿Si tuvieras que escribir un texto, sobre cuál de los siguientes temas te gustaría más hacerlo, bien sea para estar de acuerdo o para estar en desacuerdo?
 - a. Es importante que se permita el uso de animales en espectáculos como circos, corridas de toros y peleas.
 - b. El maltrato animal es una exageración porque los animales no sienten.
 - c. Es importante consumir animales porque son necesarios para la nutrición de los humanos.
4. ¿Si tuvieras que escribir un texto, sobre cuál de los siguientes temas te gustaría más hacerlo, bien sea para estar de acuerdo o para estar en desacuerdo?

El uso de redes sociales (Facebook, Youtube, etc.) generan conflictos entre estudiantes del colegio.

 - a. Las redes sociales arruinan las relaciones entre familias, novios, amigos y compañeros.
 - b. El uso de las redes sociales afecta negativamente los resultados en el colegio.

PORTFOLIOS TO DEVELOP ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

- c. Las redes sociales son malas porque siempre generan peleas en los comentarios de publicaciones, videos, fotos etc.
- 5. En escala de 1 a 5, en donde 1 es muv poco y 5 es bastante, ¿Qué tanto sabes sobre la argumentación?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
- 6. Durante una discusión en una red social, tu prefieres:
 - a. Participar de la discusión con comentarios tranquilos.
 - b. Participar de la discusión con comentarios agresivos.
 - c. Evadir la discusión evitando escribir comentarios.
- 7. ¿Cuál consideras que debe ser el propósito de una discusión en una red social? (Varias opciones son posibles)
 - a. Que una de las partes convenza a la otra de que tiene la razón.
 - b. Que una de las partes escriba todo lo que piensa y la otra solo lea.
 - c. Que las dos partes comenten y se lean.
 - d. Que una de las partes acepte todo lo que la otra escribe.
 - e. Que las dos partes expongan sus ideas y las defiendan.
 - f. Que las dos partes se agredan mutuamente hasta que haya un ganador.
 - g. Que las dos partes aprendan de los puntos de vista de cada uno.
- 8. ¿Cuál crees que es tu mayor dificultad a la hora de escribir en inglés? (Varias opciones son posibles)
 - a. La falta de conocimiento de vocabulario en inglés.
 - b. El desconocimiento de las reglas gramaticales en inglés.
 - c. Falta de interés o motivación para escribir.
 - d. Se le dificulta comenzar el texto.
 - e. Falta de información.
 - f. Falta de instrucción.
 - g. Otras _____.
- 9. ¿Qué es lo que más te llama la atención de los libros, páginas de Internet o cualquier otro material para aprender inglés? (Varias opciones son posibles).
 - a. Que tenga imágenes llamativas.
 - b. Que tenga textos cortos.
 - c. Que explique muy bien lo que hay que hacer.
 - d. Que las actividades para desarrollar sean cortas.
 - e. Que tenga temas interesantes y relacionados con mi vida.
 - f. Que permita saber qué es lo que se aprende.
 - g. Que las actividades no me generen ansiedad.
 - h. Que tenga actividades en las que pueda dibujar o colorear.
 - i. Que me permita corregir mis errores.
 - j. Que me explique cómo puedo desarrollar las actividades.

Otros: _____

Gracias por tu colaboración.

Appendix B

Bogotá, D.C. julio 12 de 2016

Señor:

LUIS EDUARDO HURTADO LOPEZ

Rector

Colegio Marruecos y Molinos

Cordial Saludo

Yo, Oscar Fernando Abella Peña, estudiante de la Maestría en Educación con énfasis en Didáctica del inglés de la Universidad Externado de Colombia, solicito a usted me autorice para desarrollar en el colegio el proyecto de investigación “Implementation of Teacher-designed Portfolios Based on Controversial Issues to Develop Argumentative Writing” orientado por la Asesora Astrid Núñez Pardo.

Este proyecto de investigación se llevará a cabo con los estudiantes de grado Octavo durante las sesiones normales de clase y no afectará de ninguna manera los horarios establecidos. Adicionalmente solicito que se me autorice para utilizar los recursos del colegio para el fotocopiado del material que se implementará, ya que éste está contemplado dentro de la planeación integrada a la malla curricular y corresponde a las actividades propias del tercer periodo para este grado. El desarrollo del proyecto de investigación está directamente ligado con las temáticas y la didáctica de la clase de inglés.

Agradezco de antemano su valiosa colaboración con la presente autorización para el desarrollo satisfactorio de la intervención propuesta.

Atentamente,

PORTFOLIOS TO DEVELOP ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

Oscar Fernando Abella Peña
 CC. 80.235.473
 Docente

Appendix C

Bogotá, D.C., julio 22 de 2016

Yo, _____ mayor de edad,
 identificado(a) con cédula de ciudadanía N° _____ de _____
 como acudiente y tutor legal del (la) estudiante _____
 identificado (a) con el documento _____ del curso _____ e

DECLARO

Que el docente Oscar Fernando Abella Peña, identificado con cédula de ciudadanía número 80235473 de Bogotá, me ha explicado en lenguaje claro y sencillo los diversos aspectos relacionados con el proyecto de investigación que está llevando a cabo, el cual hace parte de la Maestría que el docente investigador está realizando en la Universidad Externado de Colombia y en el cual participará el niño(a) del cual soy tutor(a) legal. También me ha explicado sus alcances y limitaciones, me ha aclarado las dudas e inquietudes y me ha proporcionado la siguiente información relacionada con el proyecto *"Implementation of Teacher-designed Portfolios Based on Controversial Issues to Develop Argumentative Writing"*:

- Objetivos del proyecto
- Tipo de instrumentos y su forma de aplicación: La aplicación de estos instrumentos se realizará durante las sesiones regulares de la clase de inglés, dentro de la institución.
- La participación del niño(a) será totalmente voluntaria y sin ningún tipo de presión. Estoy informado (a) que en cualquier momento podemos retirarnos y revocar dicho consentimiento informando oportunamente a la estudiante e investigadora, si se llegase a tomar esta decisión. Igualmente, que la investigadora puede detener el estudio o mi participación en cualquier momento sin mi consentimiento.
- Los resultados me serán comunicados y se utilizarán exclusivamente para fines académicos, los cuales podrán ser difundidos en publicaciones científicas y divulgados en eventos académicos, sin exponer la identidad del menor.
- La participación del (la) estudiante en el proyecto no tiene ninguna implicación legal ni económica para el (la) menor ni para mí como tutor (a) del (la) mismo (a).
- Los resultados no implican ninguna obligación ni comprometen al estudiante e investigadora, ni a las instituciones que ellos representan, en procesos de intervención pedagógica o terapéutica.
- Los resultados de la investigación no implican alguna valoración académica negativa, que afecte el proceso académico del estudiante.
- La investigación obtenida será confidencial, no se divulgará el nombre de los estudiantes participantes, a los que hace referencia los datos según las disposiciones establecidas en la Ley 8430, por la cual se determinan los aspectos éticos de la investigación en seres humanos.
- La participación en este estudio no nos reporta ningún beneficio de tipo contractual, económico o material.

Teniendo claro lo anterior, manifiesto que estoy satisfecho(a) con la información recibida, conozco mis derechos y responsabilidades para la participación del estudiante del que soy tutor (a) legal en la mencionada investigación y obtendré copia escrita de este consentimiento, si así lo requiero.

PORTFOLIOS TO DEVELOP ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING